"THE BATTLE OF 73 EASTING"

A SCREENPLAY
BASED UPON THE TRUE STORY
OF THE
2ND ARMORED CAVALRY REGIMENT
IN DESERT STORM

BY

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REVISIONS
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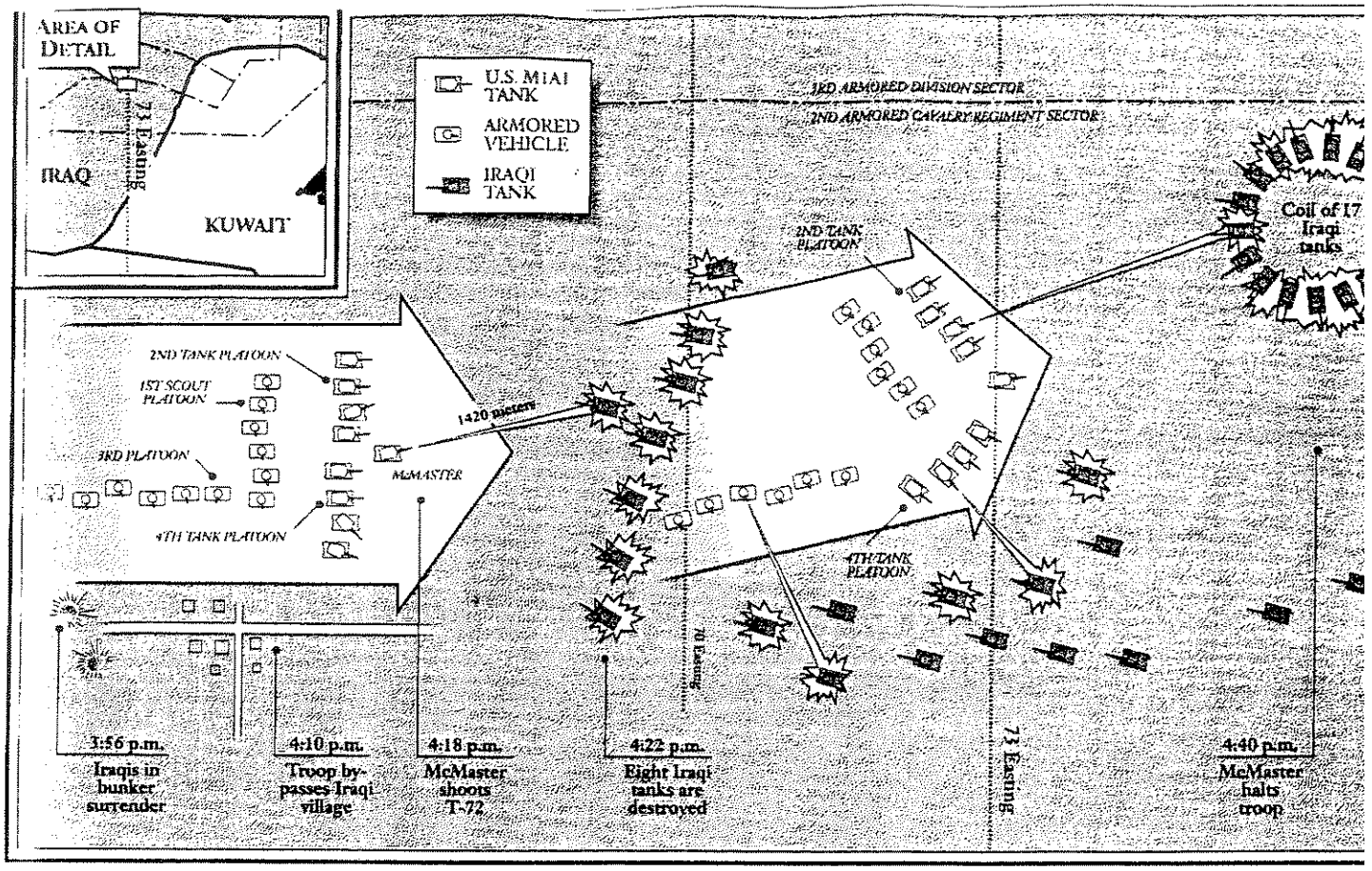
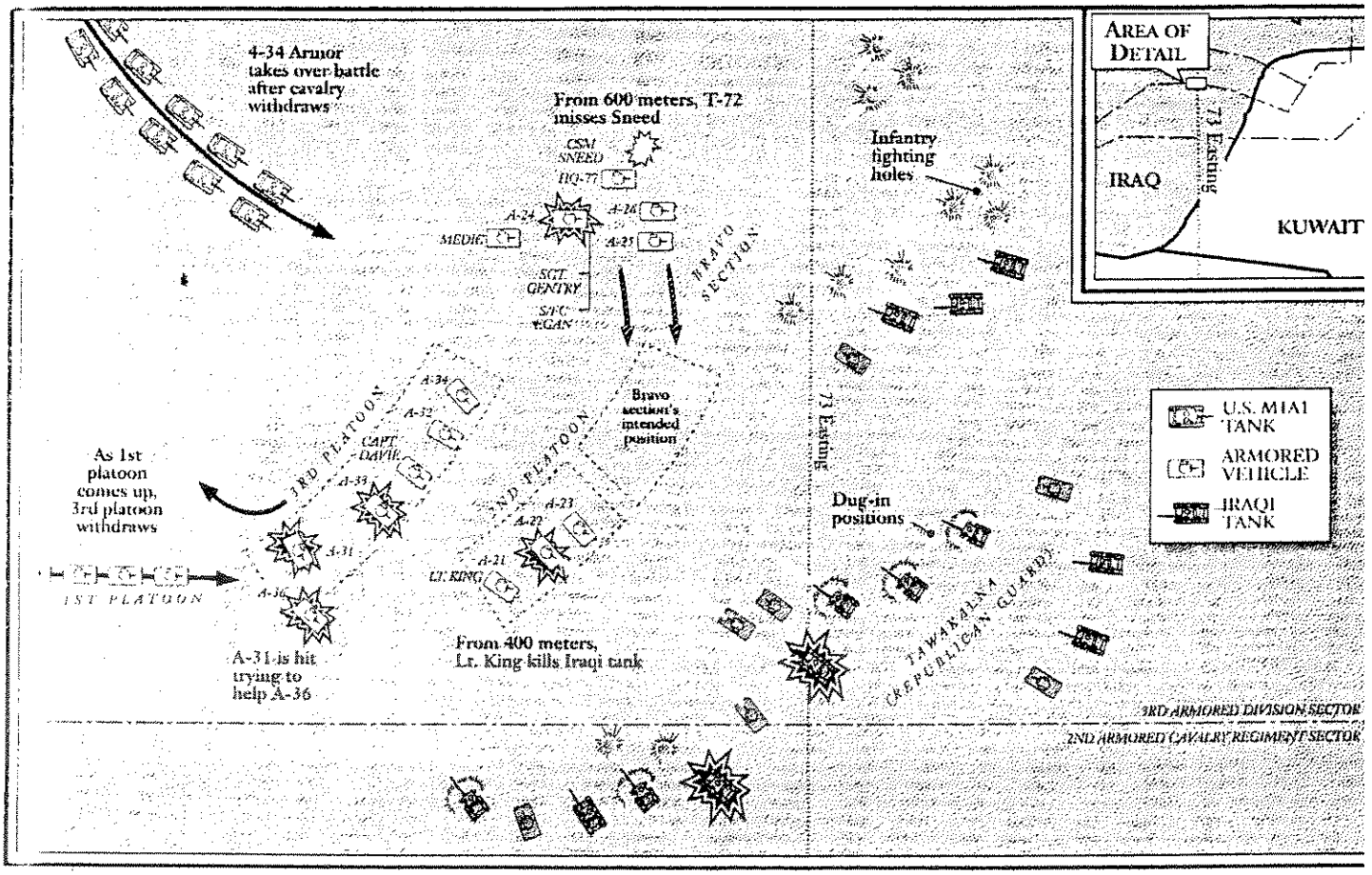
4/19/96



ON FEBRUARY 26, 1991, CAPTAIN MCMASTER'S EAGLE TROOP FOUGHT "THE BATTLE OF 73 EASTING"



ON FEBRUARY 26, 1991, CAPTAIN DAVIE'S ALPHA TROOP BATTLED FORWARD FORCES OF THE TAWAKALNA

FADE IN:

EXT. TEXAS DRY RIVER BED - DAY

Artillery shells are falling, exploding, killing us. A Trooper is blown away. Others lay dying. Panicked horses running. It's a bloody Sunday for the United States 2nd Cavalry in this barren strip of no-man's-land. We move through the desperate chaos, as there finally comes a lull in the mortar barrage.

The Mexican War -- May 9th, 1846 -- Resaca de la Palma

The Regimental Commander, COLONEL MAY, wearing the gold spurs of a cavalryman, journeys forward to survey the enemy defenses. He doesn't like what he sees. The MEXICAN ARTILLERY is dug in across the dry river bed.

COLONEL MAY
We have them now.

A young Captain, holding a bloody rag to his forehead, assumes he's joking.

CAPTAIN
From the looks of it, Colonel,
the whole Mexican Army.

COLONEL MAY
Call the charge.

CAPTAIN
Sir?

Colonel May swings up on his Horse.

COLONEL MAY
We didn't come to defend some
Godforsaken river bed, dammit,
we came to attack! Mount up!

MOMENTS LATER

The Troopers mount up, bloodied and battle worn. May trots to the point. He will lead the charge. He grimly looks back at his proud soldiers, realizing many, perhaps all of them, will not survive the next few minutes. He raises his saber.

COLONEL MAY
The 2nd Dragoons can crush any fighting
force in the world! Look for this--

The Regimental Colors are raised prominently beside him.

COLONEL MAY
--and you'll find me! If I go down,
pick it up, and keep on picking it
up until those bastards are whipped!
Remember your Regiment and follow
your Officers! Charge, CHARGE!

(BEGIN CREDIT MONTAGE)

Colonel May spurs his horse. The thin sweet notes of a company bugle are lost in the heavy thudding of hoofs across sun-baked ground. May boldly leads his cavalrymen out of the reseca, CHARGING ACROSS THE OPEN PRAIRIE, and straight into the teeth of the Mexican defenses.

The Mexicans OPEN FIRE!

Troopers fall, horses stumbling, trampled horribly by those coming behind them. But the Cavalry keeps charging, following Colonel May, riding with a deathwish, closing in, still more Troopers taking bullets, and still they come!

The Trooper holding the Regimental Colors is SHOT -- the flags starting to fall OUT OF HIS HAND -- BUT THEY ARE GRABBED, on the run, by a TROOPER galloping up beside him.

Colonel May LEAPS HIS HORSE over their first line of defense. The Cavalry follows right behind him, endless horses flying over the walls.

The mounted combat is brutal, in close, Cavalrymen slashing their sabers down on the overwhelmed Mexicans. Little regard for his life, Colonel May overruns enemy soldiers, saber in one hand, firing his pistol with the other. The dust and confusion OBSCURE EVERYTHING--

FADE TO BLACK

INT. WEST POINT CLASSROOM - DAY

We see an ARTIST'S DEPICTION of Colonel May's charge. The BOOK slams shut. The hardback cover reads "History of United States Cavalry."

1981 - Army Academy at West Point

A classroom of CADETS interact with the INSTRUCTOR.

INSTRUCTOR
When the dust cleared, Colonel May's charge had sent General Artista's Mexican Army fleeing for their lives, swimming back across the Rio Grande.

An eager cadet, H.R. LANCASTER, speaks with great passion.

LANCASTER
The first punch wins, sets the enemy off-balance, and if you keep punching, they seldom recover.

Another cadet, GERALD DAVIE, disagrees.

DAVIE
Perhaps, H.R., but Colonel May lost 148 Troopers, pretty stiff price--

LANCASTER
(interrupting)
But it saved lives in the long run! Look at Normandy. If Patton's Third Army had been given the resources to continue the advance, the Germans would have been on their knees in weeks instead of months. By stopping, we gave them time to regroup, launch the Ardennes Offensive, and it cost us tens of thousands of Allied lives!

DAVIE
That was entirely different, H.R. Your blood lust is best saved for the rugby field--

CUT TO:

EXT. WEST POINT - DAY

We move across the Parade Grounds of the U.S. Army Military Academy in all its' pagentry as UNIFORMED CADETS march in practiced unison. We keep moving, closing on the adjacent

"CLINTON FIELD"

where a RUGBY MATCH is almost over. Army is soundly defeating Air Force. The hometown CROWD is roaring, as both squads set up for a play, the ball deep in Army territory.

H.R. LANCASTER

helps a tackled TEAMMATE back to his feet.

LANCASTER
Get up, man. Let's stop 'em!

ARMY TEAMMATE
(exhausted)
We've won. Clock's almost out. They score one, so what?

This attitude enrages Lancaster.

LANCASTER
When you're ahead, you still put the ball in the fuckin' endzone! You put the game away!

Lancaster angrily yanks the player up, shoving him back into the game.

A pack forms around the ball, a "scrum down." Air Force successfully rolls the ball to their backs, and suddenly THREE AIR FORCE PLAYERS are turning the corner, running for a certain goal! The last man to beat is--

--Lancaster, who has only one chance to make a play. Timing his hit, he violently crashes into the running back, a monster hit, popping the ball loose. Getting a lucky bounce, Lancaster picks up the ball!

The HOMETEAM CROWD rises to it's feet cheering as Lancaster runs the length of the field and scores! Touches the ball down.

Lancaster is mobbed by his teammates! They all huddle up and give three cheers, pumping fists, victorious! Teammates all raise H.R. up on their shoulders. ARMY FLAGS are waved triumphantly into the air!

FADE TO:

INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

We pull from the REGIMENTAL COLORS (flags) behind the head table at a formal "Dining Out" of the Second Armored Cavalry Regiment.

July, 1990 -- Nurenberg, Germany

Officers and senior non-commissioned officers (NCOs) wear their dress uniforms. "The Punch Bowl Ceremony" is underway. A silver urn stands prominently beside the main table. Commanders from each unit take turns dedicating a bottle of liquor to the cavalry punch.

A fifth of Cuervo 1800 tequila is emptied into the punch.

LTC MARCY
In honor of the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment in the Mexican War, I offer this fine bottle of Tequila to commemorate Colonel May's leading of the charge at Resaca de la Palma in 1846.

Cut to a bottle of Jack Daniels Bourbon pouring out.

CPT SARTIANO
--This fine Southern Bourbon to honor the victory over our adversaries at the Battle of Yellow Tavern during the Civil War.

Whiskey is next. Various soldiers grin at this alcoholic monstrosity.

COLONEL BLADEHORN
--Settler's Whiskey to commemorate the Cavalrymen who endured the Indian Wars from 1865 through 1898.

Major DOUGLAS MacBRIAR, a statuesque Scotsman, pours Cognac.

MAJ MACBRIAR
--fine Cognac in honor of being the only mounted cavalry regiment in World War I, where our French comrades bestowed on us the motto, Toujours Pret! -- Alway's Ready!

Jaggermeister is next. In the b.g. a table has a placard reading *"Eagle Troop."* We focus on Captain H.R. LANCASTER, an intense, muscular, 28-year-old.

LTC ROBINETTE (OS)
--Jaggermeister to remember the regiment's breakout from Normandy in World War II, thru the Rhine, and into Bohemia as the vanguard from General Patton's 3rd Army.

Squadron Commander Colonel DALE DOBBS is only the speaker to read from an 3x5 INDEX CARD, as he pours Stoylichnaya.

COLONEL DOBBS
--45 years of service on the frontier of freedom in the Federal Republic of Germany, we will add fine Vodka to honor our former enemy and new found friends.

Lancaster grins at MAJ MacBriar, who sits down beside him. All heads turn to the Regimental Commander, COLONEL HOLDER, seated prominently at the head table. He is "President of the Mess."

PRESIDENT OF THE MESS
Mr. Vice, is the punch fit for human consumption?

"MR. VICE," a Regimental Captain, samples the cavalry punch. With a rehearsed demeanor, he SPITS IT OUT.

MR VICE
President of the Mess, this punch is not fit for man nor beast. Something is missing.

A senior NCO, Sergeant First Class WILLIE BURNS, stands up.

SSG BURNS
Mr. Vice, I have the missing ingredient.

The black combat veteran from Tennessee displays a brown paper bag -- completely inappropriate. SSG Burns pulls out a quart of Budweiser. Walks to the punch bowl and pours it in.

SSG BURNS
I have here the King of American Beers, Budweiser, to commemorate the enlisted cavalrymen who have paid the ultimate price in defense of their country.

SSG Burns guzzles the last swig of beer himself. Everybody cheers the Sergeant as he steps away. Mr. Vice samples once again.

MR. VICE
Sir, the punch is now fit for human consumption.

Mr. Vice offers a taste to Colonel Holder.

PRESIDENT OF THE MESS
Yes. By God, it is. And even for man's noblest companion the horse. Gentlemen, will you join me for a toast?

All stand. Lancaster & MacBriar rise together.

PRESIDENT OF THE MESS
I propose a toast to the oldest regiment on continuous active service to the United States Army, the 2nd Dragoons. Remember Your Regiment--

EVERYBODY
(thunderously)
--And Follow Your Officers!

(END CREDITS)

INT. BANQUET HALL - LATER

Waiters are clearing dinner plates. The punch is getting the best of everybody, as they pull up chairs with friends, engaging in lively conversation.

Lancaster sits at the Squadron Command table beside Major Doug MacBriar. The Scotsman is an articulate, published scholar, who occasionally gets his point across with a caveman bluntness.

MAJ MACBRIAR
So, H.R. it comes to my attention Eagle Troop got your asses handed to you at Administrative Inspection -- again...

Lancaster PUFFS HIS CIGAR, nods, passing a fresh Cuban to MacBriar, (the two officers obviously close, a father/son type relationship.)

CPT LANCASTER
Our bumper markings were a few inches too low. Problem's being corrected, sir, but I prefer using my Troop's time training for combat, instead of dotting i's and crossing t's.

"Mr. Vice" suddenly demands everybody's attention.

MR. VICE
President of the Mess, I believe there has been a violation.

PRESIDENT OF THE MESS
Is that so, Mr. Vice? Please enlighten us.

MR. VICE
Sir, I believe the Smoking Lamp is not as yet lit this evening.

There is an ORNATE LIGHT posted behind the Regimental Commander -- which is not lit. Everybody turns to Lancaster, sucking on his fat Havana, who who realizes he is screwed.

PRESIDENT OF THE MESS
Yes, it appears Eagle Troop is in violation. How do you answer to these charges against your officers, Colonel Dobbs?

COL Dobbs isn't even holding a cigar. With a sigh, he dutifully assumes full responsibility for his men.

COL DOBBS
Guilty as charged, sir.

PRESIDENT OF THE MESS
And what shall be <u>your</u> punishment?

Captain Lancaster stands.

CPT LANCASTER
Sir, may I suggest that we play a game of Combat Musical Chairs to amuse the Mess.

PRESIDENT OF THE MESS
Yes, Combat Musical Chairs, that would be appropriate indeed.

MAJ MacBriar stands, winks at H.R., and defiantly LIGHTS A CIGAR.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Sir, let it never be said, that
any Trooper of 2nd Squadron faced
combat without me.

The crowd laughs, the Major soaking it up, as soldiers quickly arrange a ROW OF FOLDING STEEL CHAIRS in the middle of the banquet floor. Each subsequent chair faces the opposite direction.

A half dozen officers rise to play. Col Dobbs glares at Lancaster, not the first time this young Captain has challanged his Squadron Commander.

COL DOBBS
This never ends with you, Captain.

CPT LANCASTER
Sir, forgive me--
(with a wink)
But if you ain't cav, you ain't shit.

The Squadron Commander raises an eyebrow, as if slapped with a glove. A man of formidable build, Dobbs slugs down his glass of Cavalry Punch, and rolls up his sleeves. Lancaster does the same.

MR. VICE

produces a stereo boombox. Starts playing REM's current album.

2ND SQUADRON SENIOR OFFICERS

start circling, playing musical chairs, only when the music stops -- it's COMBAT! They go zero to sixty in a split second, fighting with frightening violence to sit their butt into a chair--

--Ghost Troop Captain Joe Sartiano loses, unhappy with his defeat, and returns to his table to a chorus of catcalls.

A chair is taken away. Dobbs, MacBriar, and Lancaster, are among those officers left.

The music starts. Each man's personality is evident by the way they tease while circling the chairs. The music stops. They lunge for the chairs.

MacBriar gets lucky, managing a seat.

Lancaster and Dobbs are left thrashing, grunting, wrestling to tear the chair from one another's grip. A battle of wills. They crash into the banquet tables, crowd scattering, the chair swinging around so fast it would take your head off. These men are gladiators. Unleashed Dobermans. Professional combat soldiers.

The crowd loves it. Everybody is on their feet cheering.

Lancaster & Dobbs keep fighting, stumbling, whipping their chair around, which SLAMS INTO MACBRIAR, dropping him cold to the floor.

Lancaster grabs the chair from Dobbs, forcing his butt into it, as the Squadron Commander forfeits the game, and immediately kneels beside Major MacBriar, who lays dazed on the carpet, his forehead bleeding.

COL DOBBS
Douglas!

CPT LANCASTER
(approaching, kneeling)
SHIT, we waxed the Major. Sir, sir! You okay?

MAJ MACBRIAR
(grins weakly)
Damn, H.R., you fight like a Goddamn caveman.

H.R pulls Major MacBriar to his feet, officers gathering around (who will all become familiar), laughing, rowdy, and drunk as hell. All except COL Dobbs, who is less than thrilled with his young Captain.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAVARIAN PASTURES - NIGHT

Silence. Our eyes adjust to the darkness. We start making out green florescent CHEMLIGHTS. Light sticks are everywhere. Clipped to the long radio antennas of BATTLE TANKS. We can barely make out the lethal silhouettes. We realize several ROWS OF TANKS are staged in formation.

Chemlights are clipped to the kevlar helmets of CAVALRY TROOPERS up in open turret hatches. We hear the BUZZ of military radios. The ENGINES START UP. The turbines sound like fighter jets. This is the superheated high-pitched whisper of the ABRAMS M1A1. Yankee engineering at it's deadliest.

CAPTAIN H.R. LANCASTER

stands confident in the turret hatch of his M1 tank. Positioned at the point, the Troop Commander looks through a pair of

NIGHT-VISION

binoculars. What was pitch black is now a bright green Bavarian terrain. Lancaster swings the binos around, looking back at

EAGLE TROOP

waiting for his order. We count nine M1s, consisting of Lancaster and two flanking tank platoons of four each, plus thirteen BRADLEY FIGHTING VEHICLES from two scout platoons of six each, along with a Command Track. Behind them are numerous artillery vehicles, mechanic's tracks, and logistical supply vehicles. 138 Troopers in all. Lancaster clicks the Troop radio net.

CPT LANCASTER
Battlestations, battlestations,
this is Black-6, ready report.

VARIOUS VOICES (RADIO)
Red-1, roger, over -- White-1,
roger, over -- Blue-1, roger,
over -- Green-1, roger, over.

CPT LANCASTER
Follow my move. This is when
we deliver the knockout.
(intercom to driver)
Okay, Skog, move out.

M1 DRIVER'S COMPARTMENT

Isolated forward of the turret, PFC Chris Hedonskog, from North Glen, Colorado, lies semi-reclined with his hands on the steering handlebars. He drops his *"X-Men"* COMIC BOOK, sticks his BUBBLEGUM on the wall, leans forward and looks into his driver's night sight.

PFC HEDONSKOG
You got it, sir.

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster's M1 Abrams PULLS OUT, leading the formation. The other vehicles follow. They move out in pitch blackness. And they move fast.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAVARIAN PASTURES - DAWN

Full speed, fleet as horses, Eagle Troop is CHARGING across the countryside, tank turrets scanning, guntubes swiveling around, looking for targets. The armored vehicles are painted in forest green & brown camouflage.

The M1 ABRAMS is an awesome sight, angular and streamlined, with no squat round shapes characterizing past U.S. tanks. Armored side skirts over the tracks enhance the low profile, predator look. And it doesn't miss. Even at full speed.

"MAD MAX"

Emblazoned across the lead M1's guntube is *"Mad Max."* CPT Lancaster is jostled hard, riding up in the hatch, a mapboard mounted before him.

CPT LANCASTER
(into his radio)
Keep your edge! Red 'n Blue, support
the assault by fire. Enemy position
is just over this next rise!

SGT KOCH
(intercom)
Sir, the 30 Easting is the limit of advance! Don't you think the Squadron Commander will be upset--

CPT LANCASTER
Can't stop! White, Green, going to tanks lead. Follow my move! The enemy won't know what hit 'em--

"Mad Max" swings up past the Bradley Scout Vehicles. White & Green tank platoons follow the Commander up over a rise--

ENEMY TANKS

are dug in behind earthen berms. They fire, orange flame spitting out.

SGT KOCH (OS)
IDENTIFIED! Tanks direct front! Four dead ahead, four more off to the left!

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster sees the large enemy emplacement not 800 yards away.

CPT LANCASTER
CONTACT EAST, TANKS! Assault, Assault, Assault!

SSG Craig Koch, from Williamsport, Pennsylvania, hits the button on the laser finder and the display under the gunsight shows 2225 meters. Racing fullspeed, the computer firing system keeps the main gun stabilized and on target.

CPT LANCASTER
Gunner sabot three tanks, left tank!

CRP TAYLOR
Up!

CPT LANCASTER
FIRE!

Koch pulls the trigger, the breech recoils, the main gun firing.

SGT KOCH
On the way!

CPT LANCASTER
Target, right tank! Shit, c'mon, Taylor!

Taylor loads another round an screams "Up!" As Lancaster's tank fires again, a FRENZIED CRY sounds over the radio net.

1LT HAMILTON (RADIO)
Black-6, White-1, we're hit, we're hit!

Now isn't the time to mourn the dead.

CPT LANCASTER
Stay on line, keep moving! Keep focused, Let's finish 'em, Eagle!

COL DOBBS (RADIO)
Black-6, this is Cougar-6, the three zero is the limit of advance! Black-6, report!

CPT LANCASTER
Roger, we cannot stop! Engaged and destroyed ten armored vehicles, lost one M1, continuing to assault. We're still in contact, I say again, we cannot stop!

CRP Taylor slams another round into the breech.

CRP KOCH
UP!

SGT KOCH
Identified!

CPT LANCASTER
FIRE!

SGT KOCH
On the way! Target! What th--?

Suddenly RED LIGHTS start flashing, a SIREN shrieking!

CPT LANCASTER
(angry, deflated)
SONOFABITCH!

Lancaster slams his fist. Everybody just stops playing. Koch is climbing up out of his gunner's seat.

SGT KOCH
Who got us?

CRP TAYLOR
We're dead already?

The tank slows to a stop. Lancaster climbs out on his turret hatch mad as

hell. YELLOW SIRENS mounted on the hull are flashing. Lancaster kicks one, breaking it. He stands on his tank, looking out over

THE BATTLEFIELD

which is now a SEA OF FLASHING RED LIGHTS. Eagle's armored vehicles are still charging, firing, now well past the initial enemy defense, and now lighting up the enemy's reserve.

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster's gunner, loader, and driver have emerged from the tank.

PFC TAYLOR
We got 'em all -- check it out.
Now that's a pretty sight.

The enemy is dead. In training, tanks have the MILES laser, which simulates a main gun. Sensors flash when hit by another tank's laser. To enhance things, a firing simulator mounted over the guntube blasts a small charge with every shot.

CPT LANCASTER
How many we lose?

PFC HEDONSKOG
Looks like just Lieutenant Hamilton
and us.

PFC TAYLOR
Works for me. Look at our guys go,
we kicked their ass. Delivered the
big kibosh!

SGT KOCH
We're dead, Taylor.

PFC TAYLOR
Might've survived.

CPT LANCASTER
They'd be hosing us out of the turret.

A HUMMWV drives up. Colonel DOBBS hops out, decked out in combat gear, and stands toe-to-toe with his impetuous young Captain.

COL DOBBS
Who is it in Eagle Troop I should
talk to when I want my specific
orders followed?

CPT LANCASTER
That would be me, sir.

In the b.g, Major MACBRIAR drives up, eating a SNICKERS. The big, blonde Scotsman is always eating.

COL DOBBS
Not anymore, last time I checked, these lights mean you're dead, Captain -- because you exceeded the limit of advance.

CPT LANCASTER
Sir, I saw an opportunity and felt that we had to exploit it--

COL DOBBS
I've had it with your grandstanding, Lancaster. You don't listen to orders! These funny little bars on my shoulder, you do know what they mean, Captain?

MacBriar steps into the fray, respectful of his superior.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Sir, LOOK at the enemy--

Dobbs looks toward the sea of FLASHING DEAD ENEMY TANKS.

MAJ MACBRIAR
--Every other troop to make this run has had their asses handed to them.

COL DOBBS
You could never get soldiers to risk their lives in such a maneuver if real bullets were flying. And once you were killed, everything would've stopped, because soldiers require officer supervision. Men will only do what they are ordered to do. All except <u>you</u>, of course.

CPT LANCASTER
The Troop's success has little to do with me, sir. Eagle has great platoon leaders and NCOs. The men know what to do if I get hit.

COL DOBBS
You're out of your mind, Captain. And may I point out, according to the Uniform Code of Military Justice, 'the penalty for disobeying a direct order in time of war is <u>death</u>.'

CPT LANCASTER
Sir, in Colonel Holder's Spot Report #2, he says the worst thing that an officer can do in a combat situation that requires an immediate decision is wait for orders.

COL DOBBS
That does not give you the authority
to assault a Battalian!

MacBriar is now trying to separate them.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Col Dobbs, sir, I--

COL DOBBS
Stop defending him, Douglas! If the
Captain is a such a scholar of the
Regimental Commander, he also knows Col
Holder makes perfectly clear a unit needs
a three-to-one superiority to attack!

A BRITISH CAPTAIN, filthy from the wargame, drives up in a HUMMVW, surprising them. He interrupts, speaking directly to Dobbs.

BRITISH CAPTAIN
You kept us the run the whole time,
Colonel Dobbs, shot the hell outta us.
Came so fast we never had a chance.
Still trying to find me bum so the
commander's got something to chew on.
Congratulations, sir.

The British Captain drives on. Dobbs glares at Lancaster.

COL DOBBS
Report to me when we get back to
Bamberg and we will discuss your
selective obedience of orders.

Dobbs walks back to his HUMMWV, while MacBriar lingers a moment.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Let it roll off your back, this is
nice work, H.R. So you got yourself
waxed. Your men survived to fight on.
Their high level of training is evident.
But you have got to know when to shut up,
or you won't be there when it counts.

CPT LANCASTER
Sir, I'm sorry, but I just don't
understand how he got where he is.

MAJ MACBRIAR
(angered)
Knock it off, H.R. The Colonel is an extremely efficient Squadron Commander. All you need to understand is Dale Dobbs believed in you enough to give you Eagle Troop -- and he can take it away.

Lancaster nods. Both men calm down. MacBriar grins.

MAJ MACBRIAR
(softer tone)
H.R, in peacetime an officer builds his career by not making mistakes. But in war, that's the exact quality you don't want. A combat officer must take risks.
(a beat)
Look at Ghost Troop, they fell behind, hesitated, and got their asses handed to them back in the wadie. God help 'em if we ever see a real shooting war.

CUT TO:

INT. COL DOBBS' OFFICE - DAY

The lettering on the door reads *"2nd Squadron, 2nd ACR, Commander Colonel Dobbs."* H.R. LANCASTER stands formally, hands behind his back. The look on the young Captain's face tells us he's been getting chewed out.

COL DOBBS
--And another thing that's come to my attention is the lack of basic financial skills by many of your newer soldiers--

CPT LANCASTER
(wondering if he heard right)
Sir, financial skills?

COL DOBBS
I propose a Check Writing Class to alleviate the problems our Troopers are having with the local merchants--

CPT LANCASTER
Sir, in my opinion, what my men need is more time in the tracks perfecting battle drills and gunnery skills. In the event of an actual war, we're going to need soldiers, not accountants--

COL DOBBS
You fucking with me, Captain?

CPT LANCASTER
No, sir--

The Squadron Commander stands.

COL DOBBS
Just can't wait for a war, can you?

CPT LANCASTER
Only a chance to do what we've been trained to do.

The Squadron Commander starts circling the 28-year-old Captain.

COL DOBBS
Senior command is staffed with Vietnam veterans who can give you a million reasons why that's the last thing you want. 7th Corps Commander, Fred Franks, lost a leg and nearly a third of his men invading Cambodia. You don't find many veteran combat officers looking for another war. And the American people most definitely do not want it.

CPT LANCASTER
With all due respect, sir, if the time comes, this Vietnam-era attitude may be to our disadvantage. An effective fighting force cannot be preoccupied with self preservation--

COL DOBBS
(cutting him off)
It may just give our political leaders the wisdom to avoid World War III, Captain! We train in hopes that the threat alone of our military power is enough to keep the peace. And in peacetime, your Troopers need to know how to balance their FUCKING CHECKBOOKS! Are we clear?

CPT LANCASTER
(begrudgingly)
Yes, sir.

CUT TO:

EXT. LANCASTER'S HOUSE - DAY

A quaint house on a charming suburban street in Europe.

Hirschaid, Germany

INT. LANCASTER'S KITCHEN

Pots are banging. An adorable 10-MONTH-OLD BABY GIRL plays on the kitchen floor with Mommy's kitchenware pulled out of a cabinet. H.R. LANCASTER leans down and lovingly scoops up his little girl.

LANCASTER
What's going on down here, Coco?

His pretty wife, KATIE LANCASTER, an Orange County blonde, is baking cookies. Their 4-year-old daughter, KATHARINE, sits up on a stool, so she can reach the counter.

KATIE
Maybe you could feed her, honey?

Katie tosses a jar of GERBERS -- Lancaster one-hands it, reads the label, as he puts his youngest in her highchair. H.R. sneaks a cookie off the platter when Katie is not looking.

LANCASTER
We eat better than this.

He sits down and starts to give Colleen a bite of the cookie he snuck -- suddenly finds Katie, hands on her hips, shooting him a dirty look.

LANCASTER
What?

KATIE LANCASTER
I don't think so, mister.

KATHARINE
Cookie's will spoil Coco's dinner, daddy.

H.R. grins sheepishly, eats the cookie himself.

LANCASTER
(his mouth full)
What cookie?

He may be the Commander of an armored cavalry troop, but she's the boss in this house. A TRANSISTOR RADIO plays softly.

RADIO NEWS (OS)
--this special bulletin just in, AP Wire Service reports the Iraqi Army invaded Kuwait City early this morning--

Lancaster stiffens, adrenaline surging, he can't believe his ears.

LANCASTER
Honey!

Katie quickly crosses to H.R., tightly holding his hand.

RADIO NEWS (OS)
--sending attack helicopters and tanks storming into the Kuwaiti capital. Saddam Hussein has proclaimed Kuwait no long exists, except as the 19th Province, an eternal part of Iraq--

BEGIN MONTAGE:

CNN News footage of IRAQI REPUBLICAN GUARD taking Kuwait City. Soviet T-72 TANKS rolling through the oceanfront paradise, main guns booming, shelling buildings, fires burning in the streets. HELICOPTER gunships circling over the Capital. Terrified CITIZENS stopped at roadblocks.

NBC news footage of a determined President GEORGE BUSH on the White House lawn passionately addressing the media.

PRESIDENT BUSH
This will not stand. This will not stand, this aggression against Kuwait.
(waving off further questions)
I have to go, I gotta go to work...

Bootleg videotape of Iraqi atrocities. Summary executions of Kuwaiti men in public squares. Mutulated bodies left unburied. Men showing scars of torture. A WOMAN gives testimony at *"The Congressional Human Rights Caucus."*

WOMAN'S TESTIMONY
They tortured him, abused him, and after 10 days of torture, they brought him to this parent's house, called out all of his family, the neighbors, and shot him dead in front of his mother...

Video of Iraqi soldiers looting stores, loading stolen TVs, stereos, appliances into military trucks. Raiding private homes. Carrying away furniture and Persian rugs. Cut to a tearful 15-YEAR-OLD GIRL giving testimony to Congress.

15-YR-OLD'S TESTIMONY
I saw Iraqi soldiers come into the hospital with guns, they took the babies out of the incubators, took the incubators, and left the children to die on the cold floor...

An angry PRESIDENT BUSH addresses the world on TV.

PRESIDENT BUSH
And that's what we're dealing with,
Hitler revisited, a totalitarianism
and brutality that is naked, and
unprecedented in modern times.
And that must not stand!

Shots of the biggest deployment of U.S. Forces since Vietnam. Aircraft carrier *USS Theodore Roosevelt* loading up war machinery. Tomahawk missiles loaded onto the Battleship *USS Wisconsin*. F-117 Stealth Fighters refueling midair on their way to Saudi Arabia. C-131 Air Transports landing in the Arab sand. Soldiers setting up defensive positions in the vast, featureless desert.

CNN footage of General COLIN POWELL walking with General NORMAN SCHWARZKOPF amongst the troops in Saudi Arabia. Gorbachev visiting President Bush at the White House. We close with CNN's network stylish logo for *"Desert Shield"* with actor James Earl Jones' baratone voiceover.

Tight on Iraq's empty seat on the floor of the UNITED NATIONS as economic sanctions are voted against them. The PICKETERS outside waving BANNERS, *"No Blood For Oil." "George Bush Send Your Sons, Not Ours!"*

END MONTAGE:

INT. OFFICER'S CLUB - NIGHT ✱ longer

LANCASTER is lining up shots of whiskey at the bar, with his Lieutenants JOHN HILLEN, ex-fraternity boy TIM GAUTHIER, and lanky Canadian "BULLWINKLE" HAMILITON. The rowdy officers are getting stinko--

CPT LANCASTER
To Saddam. We're finally gonna
get to kick some *fucking ass*!

1LT GAUTHIER
(bummed)
I was getting married next month.

1LT HAMILTON
Either way you would've been fucked.
If we didn't deploy, the Captain
would've been a bitch to live with.

They laugh, as MAJ DOUGLAS MACBRIAR sits at the PIANO. He rests his cigar across his double malt scotch, and starts PLAYING A CLASSICAL music piece, something hauntingly beautiful.

MAJ MACBRIAR
This was Rommel's favorite.

Everybody STOPS TO LISTEN, not only surprised at the Major's virtuosity, but at how much the music affects them, tonight, on the brink of war. Gauthier leans toward Lancaster's ear.

1LT GAUTHIER
(confused)
Rommel was a fuckin' Nazi.

CPT LANCASTER
The Desert Fox is MacBriar's main man. Thinks he's the greatest armored tactician ever.

1LT HILLEN
Even made me hang Rommels' portrait in the Command Track.

COLONEL DOBBS

strolls in. Polite greetings, acknowledging salutes, he crosses to the bar. He finds his officers drinking whiskey, who salute, sobering up, unsure around their Squadron Commander. The bartender knows to pour him VSOP cognac.

COL DOBBS
And a round for my officers.

JUNIOR OFFICERS
Thank you. sir.

COL DOBBS
(toasting them)
Top off your tanks, gentlemen, the well is going to be high and dry over in Saudi.

They all raise their glasses. Lancaster is polite with the Colonel, but does not initiate conversation.

COL DOBBS
I trust you all have your families and loved ones squared away. How're Katie and the girls taking it, H.R.?

CPT LANCASTER
Katie's my rock, sir. But you know how it is.

1LT HAMILTON
Sir, were you married when you fought in Vietnam?

COL DOBBS
I missed seeing action in 'Nam. Saigon fell just as I left the Point.

Tight on Lancaster, realizing his Commander has never been tested in wartime. Dobbs gazes off at MacBriar, playing such beautiful piano.

COL DOBBS
But it seems I've been cleaning up the mess all these years.
(reflective)
First stationed me at Fort Benning, a green Lieutenant, trying to keep discipline with 20-year-old combat veterans who'd 'seen the elephant' and didn't give a shit anymore.

The Squadron Commander drains his cognac, looks directly at Lancaster.

COL DOBBS
They knew discipline when I was through with them.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAMBURG AIRPORT - DAY

Eagle Troop is boarding a C-131 TRANSPORT for Saudi.

Commander H.R. LANCASTER holds his INFANT DAUGHTER one last time, reluctanty hands her back to mother. Finally he kneels down by his darling 4-year-old, KATHARINE, who doesn't quite understand what is happening.

CPT LANCASTER
It's, uh, going to be a while before we talk to each other again.

KATHARINE
Why, daddy?

CPT LANCASTER
'Cause I'm going to a place where they don't have any phones.

KATHARINE
But you are coming back, right?

CPT LANCASTER
(a beat)
Not for awhile, sweetheart...

Lancaster's voice is choking up. He's realizing people die in war and this might be the very last time he ever talks to his little girl.

CPT LANCASTER
(with difficulty)
I love you, Katharine. Gotta remember that, okay? You be a good girl for mama, and take care of your baby sister.

KATHARINE
I'm scared. Don't go, daddy.

Lancaster holds her with all his might. Then stands, knee jerk fast, trying to stop himself from crying. His young family smothers him for one last hug.

CUT TO:

EXT. PORT OF AL JUBAYL - DAY

A large port facility. A 65 ton ABRAMS M1A1 battle tank rolls down the ramp of a huge SEA LIFT COMMAND TRANSPORT freighter to the dockside. The shore is all sand, scrubby palm trees planted in a pathetic attempt at greenery.

12/5/90 -- Port of Al Jubayl, Saudi Arabia
Intermediate Staging Area

A stenciled sign reads *"Welcome to the Dew Drop Inn."* We pan over a tent city complex staked out upon concrete slabs with shower facilities and wash basins.

EXT. LOADING DOCK

DOBBS & MACBRIAR stand with senior officers listening to the Regimental Commander, COLONEL HOLDER ("President of the Mess"). The Colonel speaks in a somber, professional tone as he watches his Army unloaded.

COLONEL HOLDER
(business-like)
...Having been a troop commander in Vietnam, getting 25 soldiers hit in a fight is about the price of doing business. All told, I think we'll see about 2000 casualties.

Dobbs is disturbed by these prospects. MacBriar, the proud Scotsman, interrupts Colonel Holder.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Sir, any ideas where I can get myself a tank? I'd rather talk about helping Iraqi soldiers die for <u>their</u> country.

COL HOLDER
Douglas, if I get you a tank, what will you do with it?

MAJ MACBRIAR
Drive to Baghdad.

EXT. VEHICLE SIGN-OUT AREA

H.R. LANCASTER surveys the endless desert. Eagle Troop's commander stands waiting for his nine M1A1s to be signed out. SGT Willie Burns spits in the sand.

SSG BURNS
We should let the Marines fight
for places like this.

All military vehicles are bar-coded. A PORT SERGEANT scans the "logmars" with a handheld gizmo, electronically accounting for each tank.

CPT LANCASTER
Hand me my sand wedge.

Lancaster's HUMMWV DRIVER tosses him a GOLF CLUB. H.R. tees up a golfball on the sand, sets up, SWINGS, and drives it a good 300 yards.

CPT LANCASTER
Any decent courses around here,
Sergeant?

The Sergeant scans the last bar code, looks at Lancaster like he's crazy.

PORT SERGEANT
Biggest goddamn sand trap anybody ever
hit into, sir. You're good to go.

EXT. PORT EXIT ROAD

Lancaster rides in a HUMMWV, leading his nine tanks single-file out the road to the staging area. They pass a PLATOON OF SOLDIERS in dreaded MOPP CHEMICAL SUITS road marching around the complex. Lancaster grimaces.

A PICKUP TRUCK

suddenly goes flying by Lancaster's HUMMWV, screeching to a halt, and cutting off Eagle Troop's tanks. A PORT LIEUTENANT starts shouting.

PORT LIEUTENANT
Sir! You have to go back to the tent.

CPT LANCASTER
I've gotta do what?

PORT LIEUTENANT
You have to go back to the tent, sir!
We haven't properly signed you out.

CPT LANCASTER
You've gotta be kidding me.

PORT LIEUTENANT
Sir, this isn't our port, the Marines
own it, you're gonna have to--

CPT LANCASTER
(cuts him off)
I'll tell you what, if you don't get your fucking pickup truck out of my way, I'm going to run it over with these nine M1s, because we ain't going back anywhere.

PORT LIEUTENANT
Sir, I'm going to have to report you to my boss, the Brigadier General.

CPT LANCASTER
The name's Lancaster -- just make sure you spell it right.

Lancaster waves his tanks on. The nine turbines roar. The Port Lieutenant quickly maneuvers his pickup out of the way, as Lancaster leads his tanks past.

CUT TO:

EXT. AL JUBAYL PAINTING FACILITY - DAY

PAINT CREWS give vehicles their desert tan camouflage. All headlights are removed, so nobody can inadvertently turn on any white lights during combat. Squadron Commander COL DOBBS is chewing out Lancaster as they walk along, followed by MacBriar and SSG Willie Burns.

COL DOBBS
I noticed your tanks were not uniformly loaded in accordance with my earlier guidance. Also, your bumper markings are still visible on some of your Bradleys.

CPT LANCASTER
(thinking this unimportant)
Yes, sir.

Dobbs pats an old, beaten up M1 ABRAMS TANK, grinning at the big Scot, who uses a knife to slice hunks off a PEPPERONI. MacBriar is always eating.

MACBRIAR
No -- this?

COL DOBBS
Got some miles on her. Regimental Commander released it to us this morning. Still needs a crew, but she's yours if you still want her.

Sergeant Willie Burns hops up on the tank.

SSG BURNS
We can fix her up, sir. I see a big ass anarchy symbol on the side, and the Blue Cross of Saint Andrew on the rear so I know not to frag your ass.

CPT LANCASTER
You know something, Willie? You know why the Major takes you everywhere?

SSG BURNS
Why's that, sir?

CPT LANCASTER
Because there's no doubt in anyone's mind that when it counts, you'd wax the enemy without batting an eyelash.

They laugh, all except the SQDN CDR, who is apprehensive.

COL DOBBS
I find this general enthusiasm rather disturbing, these boys, they're so damned young, seem to think they're immortal. Nobody seems to realize they could be killed, or worse yet, maimed for life.

Lancaster looks at MacBriar like what is this guy talking about?

COL DOBBS
Imagine if we get waxed? They'll be shark fodder left on their own. That's why, as Commanders, we should try and <u>not</u> get personally involved in the fighting.
(a beat)
Let's just pray the politicians find a diplomatic solution. The best thing for us would be to get some great training, the Iraqis pull out, and we go home.

CPT LANCASTER
(disgusted)
Yes, sir -- that would be super, wouldn't it. I think we should call the troop together, say 'gee guys, I hope we really don't have to fight, gee, that would suck.

MAJ MACBRIAR
That's enough, Captain!

The SQDN CDR glares at Lancaster. MacBriar quickly steps forward, separating the two.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Sir, what Captain Lancaster is saying, is we should focus these troops on the task that will soon be at hand -- killing the enemy. Right now fear is our worst enemy.

COL DOBBS
My biggest fear is when the time comes, Captain Lancaster won't follow orders.

The Squadron Commander turns, and storms off. MacBriar lays into the young Captain -- again.

MAJ MACBRIAR
We cannot afford to lose you, H.R! I need you and Eagle Troop needs you. Focus on them, not the Squadron Commander!

Lancaster turns to the proud Scotsman, speaks flatly.

CPT LANCASTER
Sir, just for the record, if I could stack skulls in my tent to get the men jacked up, I'd do it.

Lancaster salutes and walks off. MacBriar can't hide his grin, turning toward Burns, both thinking this Captain is one hell of a warrior.

SSG BURNS
Mad Max. That's the Captain. Fits, don't it?

CUT TO:

EXT. SAUDI DESERT - DAY

Eagle Troop has arrived in the middle of nowhere. 300 hundred miles deep into the Saudi desert. The men stand flabbergasted. There's absolutely nothing but sand in every direction. The crusty combat vetern, SSG Robert Patterson from Tennessee, grimly surveys the horizon.

SSG PATTERSON
One thing's for sure -- there ain't no pussy in this motherfucker.

SGT DOLAN
We should've joined the Air Force.

SSG BURNS
They've got barracks, beds with sheets, PX's full of Yahoo and Baby Ruth's, hot 'n cold runnin' women.

1LT Tim Gauthier stands with SGT Timothy Hovermale.

SGT HOVERMALE
Aw fuck it, sir. I was gettin' sick 'n tired of those simulators anyway, no fuckin' blood.

1LT GAUTHIER
(grabs his own crotch)
I had my sperm frozen, must preserve the legacy if I get waxed.

CUT TO:

INT. SQDN COM TENT - NIGHT

It's late. Colonel DALE DOBBS writes at the desk in this private tent, a heater by his feet. He pours more tea from a nice China pot. Pauses to look at a framed PHOTOGRAPH of his lovely WIFE & CHILDREN in front of their beautiful suburban home in Germany--

--as MAJ MACBRIAR walks into the tent.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Asked to see me, sir?

Dobbs nods, pulling another cup from his shelf.

COL DOBBS
Sit down. Chamomile?

MAJ MACBRIAR
Please. Freezing outside.

The Colonel pours for the Major.

COL DOBBS
How's your wife, Douglas?

MAJ MACBRIAR
Ruthanne's as good as can be expected, sir. Considering....

COL DOBBS
Of course. But I'm sure she finds comfort in that nice big home the Army provides you. Mine sure does. I imagine Ruthanne likes being a Major's wife. She will undoubtedly like it more as a Colonel's wife. Mine does.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Sir, I'm not following you.

COL DOBBS
You're a published author, Douglas. You have your Ph-D. I know you have political aspirations. Nothing like a decorated officer to lure voters to the pollboothes, is there?

MAJ MACBRIAR
What are you getting at, sir?

COL DOBBS
Captain Lancaster.
(a beat, firm)
I haven't spent nearly 20 years so some rugby playing maverick with a Patton complex can torpedeo my career.

MAJ MACBRIAR
(taken aback)
Sir, we need more officers like H.R. He's a warrior.

COL DOBBS
That he is, Douglas. A warrior whose potential disregard for direct orders may cause you and I more damage than the enemy he's sent to destroy.

The truth of this statement does not fall on deaf ears, but the proud Scotsman puts on his best face.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Sir, neither H.R., nor anybody else in this squadron will fail you. I would never let anything go forward that was not right. Let the reins out, and Captain Lancaster and the others will make us all proud.

COL DOBBS
(brutal)
There are no reins to be let out, Major. There are only orders, and we follow them to the letter. Clear and simple. Do you understand? Otherwise, you can start explaining to Ruthanne why she'll never be a Colonel's wife.

MAJ MACBRIAR
(a beat, conflicted)
Yes, sir.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAGLE TROOP - DAY

Guns & Roses are playing on a TRANSISTOR RADIO as SOLDIERS work out in the Saudi sun. Willie Burns and MacBriar spot Lancaster, as he benchpresses tank track blocks hanging from a pry bar. They have stacked crates of MREs (meals ready to eat) as a bench. The rugby player benches like a madman, finishes a set, sweating hard, and takes a breather.

CPT LANCASTER
You know what we need? We need 2nd ACR patches, something with our colors.

Willie Burns spots SGT Hovermale, as he hangs 25mm ammo boxes, weighting 55lbs each, sliding the handle over the tank bar, and does leg squats.

SSG BURNS
What for, sir?

SGT HOVERMALE
(answering for Lancaster)
What for? So we can nail 'em to the heads of our kills, so nobody else takes credit.

Burns & MacBriar start cracking up.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Sergeant, don't you think nailing patches to their skulls might be against the Geneva Convention?

CPT LANCASTER
(answering for Hovermale)
So we get stickers.
(they all laugh)
I just hope Regiment turns us loose.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Nobody but us seems real enthusiastic about attacking at high speed.

CPT LANCASTER
Who? Why? What are they worried about?

SSG BURNS
Probably of dying. Whadaya think? Not everybody thinks of this as some big opportunity.

CPT LANCASTER
Burns, you know damn well that isn't what I meant.

Hovermale finishes pumping out a set. The big Scotsman, MacBriar, takes his turn on the bench.

MAJ MACBRIAR
H.R., can't you tell when the Master Gunner is pulling your chain? Vietnam hovers like a ghost over this entire operation. The senior leadership is scared shitless it could turn out like the last war.

The song finishes. We hear a sexy FEMALE DISC JOCKEY, an Arab "Tokyo Rose."

BAGHDAD BETTY (RADIO)
Hey G.I. Joes, this is Baghdad Betty. Did you know your wives are home sleeping with Homer Simpson? Black soldiers, that white man in the fox hole next to you calls you buddy today, nigger tomorrow.

SSG BURNS
Somebody calls me the N-word I'll bust 'em in the grill.

MAJ MACBRIAR
(pausing in his set)
What in God's Earth are we listening to?

BAGHDAD BETTY (RADIO)
George Bush, he is a criminal, you don't understand this land, why don't you throw down your arms? The desert has 25 kinds of poisonious snakes. Thirty kinds of scorpions. Go home now before they send you back in tin cans like little tiny fishes.

MacBriar racks the bar. Sits up as an old Marvin Gaye tune starts, *"Let's Get it On."*

CPT LANCASTER
That's Baghdad Betty, sir. She's like Tokyo Rose on acid. Spins some good tunes, a little rock, little R 'n B, better than that symphony shit on Voice of America.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Symphony *shit*? You are indeed a caveman.

CUT TO:

TROOP VIDEO LETTER:

A "video letter" home to loved ones. Each Trooper takes a BRIEF TURN talking to a VIDEO CAMERA, which is set on a tripod, the lager in the b.g. We open on a very depressed PFC Chris Hedonskog.

PFC HEDONSKOG
Merry Christmas from Saudi. Captain Lancaster thought this'd be good for morale, his wife's sendin' copies to all the guy's families. I'm just hopin' Santa brings me a cold beer. Keep praying I haven't had my last one.

1LT Tim Gauthier, grabs some SAND, letting it fall through his fingers.

1LT TIM GAUTHIER
Havin' a White Christmas. This sand's like talcum powder, gets in everything. Spirits are kinda down. The enlisted guys keep wondering if *this* is what we're fighting for. Fuckin' sand? Or is it oil? All we know is we're freezing our asses off every night.

Lancaster's gunner, Craig Koch, wears a New York Giants football t-shirt.

SGT KOCH
Love for country? Free the Kuwaitis? Hell no, I'm pissed off 'cause these ragheads are gonna make me miss the Superbowl!

Command Track XO, John Hillen, rubs the tuft on his shaved head.

1LT HILLEN
Like the spiffy hairdo -- dead squirrel on my head?

Eagle's FIST-V TC, Danny Davis, from Texas.

2LT DAVIS
Haven't gotten any letters. Could really use one. I'm praying Kenny's team wins the Cotton Bowl.

The Bradley gunner, Tim Hovermale, is a scary dude with a shaved head.

SGT HOVERMALE
I just figure if you shoot first, ask questions later, when it's over, you're gonna be around and they're not.

"Bullwinkle" Hamilton is a tall, lanky, native of Canada. Looking much older than forty, the tank commander wears DENTURES.

1LT HAMILTON
Like my new chompers? Army paid for 'em, not bad, huh? Now if you can only learn to cook by the time I get home.

Lancaster's gunner, Mike Taylor, is super depressed.

PFC TAYLOR
I'm gonna be okay, really, you gotta stop writin' these terrible letters, sayin' things like you're gonna kill yourself if I don't come back, we got the kids to think of, baby.

Danny Davis's FIST-V driver, Joey Orth, spits chew into a cup.

PFC ORTH
Send cigs, chips, coffee, and chew.

PFC Frazier holds a volleyball.

PFC FRAZIER
We can't play football anymore because guys kept gettin' hurt. The Colonel took away the footballs, gave us volleyballs, so now we play football with volleyballs.

The Command Track TC, Willie Burns.

SSG BURNS
Had this false alarm, Fox reports incoming, air to ground bombs. Me, I'm thinking what other kind is there? So the Major says we're on our way, and I say, whoa, sir, if they're takin' artillery, why're we going there?

MacBriar's gunner, Rodney Abacrombie.

SGT ABACROMBIE
And I say,'hey man, we gotta find this rat 'cause the cobras hunt 'em, and we don't need a cobra in the tent.' So everybody freaks, starts searchin' and they find it, fifteen guys trying to stomp on the rat--

Bullwinkle Hamilton's gunner, SGT Tom McFarland, from Las Vegas.

SGT MCFARLAND
Regiment won't issue the bayonets. Say we might hurt ourselves. Go figure it. Guess if you're gonna engage a guy at 3000 meters, whadaya need a bayonet for?

Rodney Abacrombie finishes his story.

SGT ABACROMBIE
--and then comes this guy Wade with a bayonet, which nobody's supposed to have, and he skewers the rat. Then he skins it, starts wearing it on his kevlar. I say, 'hey man, you're losin' it.'

MacBriar's driver, Wade, wearing a skinned rat pelt stretched over his kevlar.

PFC WADE
Fuck this liberation bullshit, we're here to make Kuwaiti the 51st state. At least that's what the Major says.

19-year-old Jason Kick sits opening a package. Snickers Bars, popcorn, sports page clippings. He unwraps a handheld TAPE-RECORDER.

PFC KICK
This is great, Mama, really great, real food -- why a tape-recorder?

Eagle's combat veteran, Bobby Patterson, chainsmokes a Marlboro.

SSG PATTERSON
--offered millions of free cigs, but the Army said no, cigarettes are bad for the soldier's health. They send us up against T-72's, but they won't issue cigs 'cause they're bad for our health?

Patterson's gunner, Sgt Mike Dolen, sits with a mangy DESERT DOG.

SGT DOLAN
Heard this rustling under my cot, grabbed my pistol, thinking it was a damn cobra, and there he was. The guys named him 'Ham Slices,' loves riding in the Bradley.

A frightened Charley Bertubin wraps up.

PFC BERTUBIN
I'm tryin' to be brave. Stare at your picture all the time, the one from Tommy's wedding. I miss you so bad.

A somber Russell Holloway makes a peace sign, waves goodbye.

SGT HOLLOWAY
Truce.

CUT TO:

EXT. IRAQI DESERT - NIGHT

The desert is quiet. Suddenly we hear a thundering WHOOSH roar overhead in the starry blackness.

AIRCRAFT

streaking at 120 knots, only 75 feet above the Great Nafad desert, two Air Force PAVE LOW's, loaded with navigation equipment, lead four Army AH-64A APACHE Attack Helicopters flying in single file.

0200 Hours -- January 17th, 1991 -- Iraq

LEAD APACHE

The lethal-looking, heavily armored gunship has the name *"Rigor Mortis"* stenciled across her port bow. Below it *"Lt. Colonel Dick Cody"* -- Commander of the 101st Airborne Attack Helicopter Battalion. Up ahead the

PAVE LOWS

start circling. They drop two green bundles of chemical sticks, shimmering like small piles of radium, as they fall to the desert floor.

LEAD APACHE

The pilot, Warrant Officer Thomas "Tip" O'Neil, buzzes over his helmet headset.

O'NEIL (PILOT)
That's the signal, target Oklahoma now at 10 clicks -- time for Petula.

COL CODY
Roger that, we're going Downtown, baby.

As they begin the final stalk, O'Neil pushes play on a TAPE RECORDER. We hear Petula Clarke singing the 60's hit *"Downtown"* -- in bizarre contrast to the droll professionalism of the pilots and the stark violence of what waits ahead.

SONG (OS)
...things will be great when're we're Downtown, don't hesitate, c'mon, Downtown, everybody's waiting for you... .

The Apache wingmen move up into a battle-spread formation, four abreast. Cody looks through INFRA-RED SIGHTS. 36 power magnification makes their target glow like an alabaster.

SONG (OS)
...the lights are so pretty there, you can forget all your troubles, forget all your cares, when your Downtown...

He sees a dozen buildings across a compound. Three anti-aircraft pits face south. Cody matches the structures with the SATELLITE PHOTO in his hand.

COL CODY
Spooncrest radar, another Spooncrest, a flatface radar, some command vans, troop barracks, troposcatter radio antennae...

Cody can see men running, white ghosts in the sights. Lights begin to snap off. We hear a faint chirping in Cody's headset, electronic rectangles flashing on his cockpit video screen -- indicating locked on targets.

O'NEIL
They're turning out the lights. I think they know we're here.

O'Neil tugs the laser trigger with his right index finger. Spins the control knob with his thumb to ease the cross hairs onto the generator pit. The range flashes on the scope. 5026 meters. He checks the computer clock. 0237.30.

O'NEIL
Party in ten -- nine, eight, seven...

At zero he pulls the weapon's release trigger with his left hand.

O'NEIL
This one's for you, Saddam. If you want it, you got it--

With a soft whoosh a HELLFIRE missile leaps from it's rail in a shower of sparks. A nose sensor follows O'Neil's laser beam -- he's stopped breathing, gravely intent on keeping the crosshairs steady.

O'NEIL
(dead calm)
Keep her steady, backseat, keep her steady.

The missile burrows into the generator pit. Blows sky high. The other Apaches fire their payloads, erupting the sleeping desert into a raging inferno.

IRAQI RADAR INSTALLATION

The air thickened with Hellfire, IRAQI SOLDIERS boil from the barracks, like an anthill stirred with a hot stick. They can't see what is hitting them. The devastation is horrific.

O'NEIL

slaves the crosshairs left. Targets a Spooncrest Radar. He centers the laser and fires again. He sees an IRAQI pivot, run back for the radar structure, and OPEN THE DOOR -- for the Hellfire -- which actually zooms through the open door, past the stunned soldier, who is vaporized in the blinding explosion.

COL CODY
(mundane)
Okay -- let's do rockets.

THE APACHES

unleash a volley of slender HYDRA ROCKETS at 4000 meters. Each warhead carries tiny finned darts that pepper the radar site like buckshot, ripping through wires, electronics, and men. At 2000 meters the choppers open up with 30mm CANNON FIRE. Thousands of slugs kick up geysers of sand, rekilling the dead.

SONG (OS)
...things will be great when're we're
Downtown, don't hesitate, c'mon, Downtown,
everybody's waiting for you...

O'NEIL

circles at low attitude for a final look. Nothing moving but the flames. Bodies lie scattered like bloody rugs.

O'NEIL
Okay, that's about it, can't ID anymore targets. Let's head home and grab some lunch. Hope they're not serving that beef stew again.

COL CODY
Isn't it spaghetti on Tuesdays?

O'NEIL
You think?

Lt. Colonel Cody keys his microphone to the waiting Pave Lows, who will relay a message to Riyadh.

COL CODY
This is White Six. Oklahoma Alpha, Alpha, over.

Still wearing night-vision, O'Neil spots a SWARM OF LIGHTS to the South.

O'NEIL
Sir, at 9:00 o'clock, coming fast, see 'em?

Cody spots the Air Force package -- two EF-111 electronic jammers followed by two dozen F-15E bombers and British Tornados heading for Scud batteries in

western Iraq. As they hit the border, their lights wink off. With a deep growl, the formation streaks directly overhead the Apaches.

COL CODY
The wolves are in the fold.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

"USS Wisconsin" FIRES jayhawk missiles into the black Persian night.

Infamous CNN green NIGHTVISION VIDEO of Baghdad under attack, anti-aircraft guns firing wildly into the black sky, as Stealth Fighters precision bomb the capital. The barrage a firestorm above the city. CNN's Bernard Shaw's frightened, rambling account under a coffee table at his Baghdad hotel.

BERNARD SHAW
It's happening, it's happening!...

We see F-117A Stealth Fighter TARGETING VIDEO of laser guided "smart bombs." Direct hits on the Telephone & Telegraph Building. The Tower for Wire & Wireless Communications. Air Defense Command. Various Government Ministries. And Saddam's lakeside palace.

A B-52 Stratofortress carpetbombing Iraqi Troop concentrations. The desert booming with a deadly fireworks show unlike anything the world has ever seen.

INT. LANCASTER'S HOME - NIGHT

The flashly CNN PROGRAMMING LOGO, now changed to *"Desert Storm."* A livid SADDAM HUSSEIN raises his fist in a televised speech.

SADDAM HUSSEIN (TV)
(translated by interpreter)
The great showdown has begun. The mother of all battles is under way!

We pull from the TV set and find KATIE LANCASTER holding her two girls, watching the war from her living room.

4-YEAR-OLD KATHARINE
Is Daddy okay, Mommy?

KATIE
(masking fear)
Of course, honey. Daddy's gonna put Saddam Hussein in jail.

END MONTAGE:

EXT. EAGLE TROOP - NIGHT

A beautiful starry night in the desert. Soldiers are sleeping. We find H.R. Lancaster on the back deck of his tank, reading Tolstoy's short stories with a chemlight. A RUNNER appears, excited, holding an envelope.

RUNNER
Sir? Captain Lancaster?

H.R. is startled, he lowers his book, stares unhappily at the private.

RUNNER
I've been sent with a sealed note
from Squadron, sir.

CPT LANCASTER
Okay Lee, let's have a look.

HR reads it with his chemlight. We tighten on his face, which brightens into a charged smile, as he pumps his fist!

SGT KOCH
What is it, sir?

But Lancaster ignores him, rummaging through his rutsack. Finds a CIGAR. He climbs up into his turret hatch. Lights the cigar. Inhales deeply, savoring the aroma. He HEARS the sorties flying overhead. SEES the impacts glowing on the horizon. He clicks on the radio. Reads from the sealed letter.

CPT LANCASTER
This is Black-6, I have important
news. Jayhawk Six reports Tomahawk
cruise missiles have been launched.
We're at war.

CUT TO:

EXT. TROOP LAGER - NIGHT

COL DOBBS walks in front of a slide projection of a SOVIET T-72 TANK. The meticulous Squadron Commander reads from his index cards.

COL DOBBS
The Soviet-built T-72 is a formidable tank.
While it's main gun kill range is no more
than 2800 meters -- only 200 meters less
than ours -- the damn thing's built so close
to the ground that it's very hard to hit.

The 138 men of Eagle Troop are gathered around a LARGE SCREEN in the desert night. The Troopers listen soberly. We can see the fear in their eyes.

COL DOBBS
When they're dug into the sand with only their guns poking out, we may not see 'em until we're well within their kill sack.

Dobbs focuses on LANCASTER, visibly unhappy with these scare tactics.

COL DOBBS
The engine puts out very little heat, making it hard to detect in our thermals sights -- which supposedly give us such a big advantage.

If the Squadron Commander is trying to scare his men, he's doing a great job. A nervous Charley Bertubin whispers to Chris Hedonskog and Jason Kick.

PFC BERTUBIN
(sick with fear)
God, when we go up against that motherfucker, somebody's gonna die.

PFC HEDONSKOG
No shit, great fuckin' pep talk.

PFC KICK
(terribly nervous)
Least you're drivin' a tank. Us guys in the Bradleys are deadmeat.

COL DOBBS
If anybody's interested in the Army's new experimental vaccine for bio-chemical weapons, please consult your platoon leader. It's probably a good idea. I'm going to hand this over to Captain Lancaster, who will answer questions.
(an afterthought)
Oh yes, it's come to my attention people are playing football with the volleyballs I gave you, so those will be confiscated as well.

PFC Frazier hisses the Colonel. CAPTAIN LANCASTER takes the microphone. The young Captain starts out softly.

CPT LANCASTER
I know most of you in Eagle Troop have never seen action. I know I haven't. I'm told a certain amount of fear is not unhealthy--

Lancaster's tone suddenly hardens, hitting them like a sledgehammer!

CPT LANCASTER
--But there's been entirely too much handwringin' so far, too much 'oh me, oh my, we're gonna have a lot of casualties, this is gonna be bad,' and on and on and on, officers saying this crap, passing it on to the Troops.

Lancaster turns and engages the SQDN CDR's angry stare.

CPT LANCASTER
This nonsense stops now! When a soldier worries more about his own survival, rather than the accomplishment of his mission, then he's no longer a soldier, and the unit is no longer effective.

Willie Burns thinks this is great, he elbows wide-eyed Major MacBriar, who cannot believe what the Captain is doing.

SSG BURNS
Sir, he's picking up steam--

MAJ MACBRIAR
God, no....

CPT LANCASTER
The best way to stay alive in combat is to kill the enemy before he gets a chance to kill you.

H.R. Lancaster's warrior nature consumes him.

CPT LANCASTER
If you are sitting there with your thumb up your ass when we make enemy contact, YOU ARE WRONG! Move to the sound of guns! Close with the enemy! Don't wait to be told what to do. If you do, it will be too late!

The Captain keeps pumping the crowd's energy.

CPT LANCASTER
We are the dividing line between anarchy and civilization. We're the best equipped, most lethal killing machine on the planet. We exist to do one thing, when we're unleashed, and that is to kill everything in our path!

The Troops cheer wildly, testosterone surging.

CPT LANCASTER
So I'm here to tell you, if we all want our plane ticket home, it's waiting up across the Euphrates River, and when we're done stacking the bodies, that's when we can go!

More wild cheering! But COL Dobbs is not happy.

CPT LANCASTER
So think ~~on your feet, follow your~~ officers, execute to the best of your ability, and I'll back you 100% fuckin' percent!

STANDING OVATION. Lancaster storms off the stage, past the dumbstruck Colonel Dobbs, who turns to poor Major MacBriar. Behind him, Willie Burns slaps a high five with SSG Bob Patterson.

SSG BURNS
Mad Max is fuckin' ready to deal.

SSG PATTERSON
Lean in the saddle, you ain't cav, you ain't shit!

BEGIN MONTAGE:

CNN footage in Tel Aviv of destruction from SCUD missiles launched against Israel. Burning apartment complexes, rubble filled streets. Bloody civilians receive medical treatment. Children wearing gasmasks.

Patriot Missiles batteries fire, attempting to intercept the incoming Scuds. The word "SCUD" chyroned over targeting system video of long trailer trucks in the desert being destroyed by missiles.

President GEORGE BUSH addressing the world on TV.

PRESIDENT BUSH
The coalition will give Saddam Hussein until noon Saturday to do what he must do to begin his immediate and unconditional withdrawl from Kuwait.

SADDAM HUSSEIN hiding out in a Winnebago with his top military officers, ignoring the ultimation.

Iraqi Troops detonating Kuwaiti's oil wells. Nightmarish helicopter shot moving through towers of black smoke from the fires below. Catastrophic images of oil fires across the desert horizon, burning one after another, for as far as the eye can see. Dante's Inferno. Kuwait beaches destroyed with spilled crude oil. CNN's PETER ARNETT reports.

PETER ARNETT
We are witnessing ecological terrorism
on a scale never imagined--

President Bush gives the order. Images of endless COLUMNS OF ARMORED COALITION VEHICLES approaching "The Berm."

PRESIDENT BUSH
...I have therefore instructed General
Norman Schwarzkopf to use all forces
available to eject the Iraqi army
from Kuwait.

END MONTAGE:

INT. SCHWARZKOPF'S BUNKER - NIGHT

A huge MAP details the Coalition Forces attack plan. General NORMAN SCHWARZKOPF glares straight across the briefing table at LT General FRED FRANKS, VII Corps Commander. Franks, a silver-haired gentleman, lost a leg in the invasion of Cambodia. Schwarzkopf's large physical size, not to mention his volcanic temper, makes him all the more intimidating.

GEN SCHWARZKOPF
(loud, passionate)
We need to destroy -- not attack, not
damage, not surround -- I want you to
destroy the Republican Guard. When you
are done with them, I don't want them to
be an effective fighting force anymore.
I don't want them to exist as a military
organization. I want you to hold them
in the nose and kick them in the butt!

LTG FRANKS
I understand, sir.

GEN SCHWARZKOPF
Then let's get it done, Freddie.

CUT TO:

EXT. IRAQ BORDER - THE BERM - DAWN

The black plumes of distant OIL FIRES rage on the horizon.

"MAD MAX" (BLACK-6)

Lancaster stands on his M1 tank, looking off at THE BERM -- the mountain of boulders, land mines, and packed sand the Iraqi's built to defend their border. It stands ten meters high, ten thick, followed by a gap, then another berm.

Behind Mad Max, the ENTIRE 7TH CORPS is staged at the border, rows of armored vehicles as far as the eye can see. General Schwartzkoph is about to

heave his "Hail Mary" deep into Iraq.

CPT LANCASTER
Gentlemen, start your engines.

The mechanical beasts all START TURNING ON at once. The incredible whine, like a thousand JET ENGINES, sends superheated exhaust vapors rippling through the air, distorting shapes and images.

Lancaster stands tall in his hatch, smiling at the sound of tanks warming up. His loader, Mike Taylor, stands in the loader hatch.

PFC TAYLOR
Good luck, sir. Just wanted to say,
I know the Troop's all behind you.
We'll follow you anywhere.

Lancaster says thanks with his eyes. He shakes Taylor's hand, forget about rank, these are now brothers in arms.

CPT LANCASTER
Heard from your wife?

PFC TAYLOR
(sadly)
Still sending those crazy sick letters,
I dunno, sir, she's real scared, but
it's hard enough, you know?

CPT LANCASTER
I'll get us through, Taylor. With a team
like this, failure is not a possibility.

The Private braves a thin smile.

Various shots of soldiers in private prayer. One Catholic trooper solumly crosses his chest.

BRADLEY (BLUE-1)

PFC Jason Kick sits semi-reclined in his driver's hatch. The 19-year-old from Pembroke, Georgia ducktapes the small TAPE-RECORDER on the wall next to a PHOTO of Mom. He hits record and starts dictating.

PFC KICK
We're staged at the berm. I'm in my
driver's hole, about to put the pedal
to the metal and take us into Iraq. I'm
alone in here, and you know how I need
to talk, mama, so I'm gonna talk to you.

Mounted above the gunner's seat is a wicked PLASTER SKULL with fangs. Blue platoon leader, the handsome Arizona State fraternity boy, 1LT Tim Gauthier, enters his Bradley, and sees this monstrosity.

1LT GAUTHIER
Who's that?

SGT HOVERMALE
That's Elric.

The gunner, SGT Tim Hovermale, replies matter-of-factly, as if everybody should know who "Elric" is.

1LT GAUTHIER
Who's Elric?

SGT HOVERMALE
Elric's the Lord of Chaos. He drinks the vanquished souls lost in battle.

1LT GAUTHIER
Is that good?

SGT HOVERMALE
If Elric's on your side, that's good.

AIRCRAFT

OH58's and Cobra ATTACK HELICOPTERS from the Air Cavalry Squadron fly overhead at low altitude, proceeding 30 kilometers ahead of the formation.

"SID VICIOUS"

The M1 Abrams has the "anarchy stipple" on the sides, "Sid Vicious" on the guntube, and a big blue & white cross of St. Andrew on the back. MacBriar studies the berm through binoculars. Watches the choppers go.

MACBRIAR
(muttering to himself)
'Scots wham Bruce has aften led,
welcome to your gory bed, or to victory."

Ward & Abacrombie wait by their tank, drinking coffee hot off the exhaust grill. A moth lands in Ward's cup. He fishes it out, studies the insect, and EATS IT.

SGT ABACROMBIE
(disgusted)
You're losin' it, Ward.

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster stands beside his tank as Colonel Dobbs walks up.

CPT LANCASTER
Recon says there's nothing out there, sir.

COL DOBBS
Nobody out there with a pair of binoculars taking notes for Saddam?

CPT LANCASTER
More a question of what he could do about if he did know, sir.

COL DOBBS
No, that's a principal you don't violate, you don't get that cocky. You get that cocky and you get your ass handed to you.

CPT LANCASTER
Sir, what I meant was--

COL DOBBS
(cutting him off)
That's exactly the reason why I'm having Fox Troop lead the squadron for now.

CPT LANCASTER
Sir, I disagree!

COL DOBBS
You're overzealous, Captain. You under-estimate your enemy. I'm not going to let you do something stupid and get these boys killed.

The Squadron Commander turns and walks away. Lancaster SLAMS his kevlar helmet on the tank. He catches up with Dobbs.

CPT LANCASTER
Sir, I think it's equally dangerous to over-estimate them! Look at Montgomery in North Africa.

COL DOBBS
He won, didn't he?

ARTILLERY

batteries begin FIRING SALVOS against suspected Iraqi positions. Mortar fire clears the berm area.

BRADLEY (RED-3)

Dolan & Patterson watch the explosions. Curled up into a ball, "Ham Slices" snaps her head up at the artillery. He pats the mutt's skinny head.

SGT DOLAN
Easy girl, just dustin' things off
before they set the table.

FADE TO:

EXT. THE BERM - LATER

Combat ENGINEERS bring up the ARMORED COMBAT EARTHMOVER (ACE). Shark teeth are painted on the bulldozer blade.

COMMAND TRACK VEHICLE (BLACK-3)

Willie Burns watches from his Bradley turret.

SSG BURNS
Bulldozer from hell's ready for chow.

BRADLEY (BLUE-1)

Jason Kick continues dictating down in his driver's compartment. We HEAR the artillery cease fire.

PFC KICK
The artillery stopped. It's 1337
hours. We're going any second,
this is it, we move with the ACE,
Oh, God -- this is really it!

THE PSY-OPS TEAM

moves forward. The Psychological Operations Team's mission is to broadcast surrender appeals. TWO INTERPRETERS drive a HUMMVW with a 2000 watt stereo and large SPEAKERS mounted on the hardtop. They play Wagner's *"Rite of the Valkyries,"* also used in the helicopter attack in *"Apocalypse Now."*

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster smirks at SGT Koch.

CPT LANCASTER
Figured if it worked for Robert Duvall,
it'll work for us.

"SID VICIOUS"

MacBriar stands tall in the turret.

MAJ MACBRIAR
(to himself)
I always wanted to invade a country.

HARD-TOP HUMMVWS

mounted with M60s race across, sweeping the area with machine gun fire.

THE ACE

armored combat earthmover RACES UP TO THE BERM.

BRADLEY (BLUE-1)

Down in the driver's compartment, Jason Kick gets the word.

SGT GAUTHIER (RADIO)
Driver, pull out, execute the breech.

KICK
Roger that, sir.

Hands on the handlebar steering, Kick releases the brake, and starts rolling straight for Iraq. We share his low-to-the-ground MOVING POV out the closed hatch's three viewer windows.

BRADLEY SCOUTS

A platoon of six BRADLEYS follow in a column behind the bulldozer. The enormous crenelated blade REDUCES THE BERM, plowing, cutting a path in twenty seconds. The Scouts follow her through, MACHINE GUNS test-firing.

BRADLEY (RED-3)

Patterson rides up in the turret, as SGT Dolan TESTFIRES the coax, shooting up an abandoned TOYOTA PICKUP. The gunner anxiously calls out each hit.

SGT DOLAN
Target, target!

They stop at the second berm. In back of the Bradley,

FRAZIER & BERTUBIN

wait for the command to dismount, adrenaline surging through them. Poor Charley Bertubin is scared out of his wits.

PFC FRAZIER
Suck it up, Bert. Just do it,
make 'em pay!

SSG PATTERSON
Dismounts get yer eyes out there!

THE BERM

The Bradley's REAR DOORS OPEN. They DISMOUNT into the sand, quickly setting up security on the far side. Terrified Frazier & Bertubin sprint up the far berm, and throw themselves flat against the sand. Safe. They raise binoculars, scanning for enemy on the other side -- but find nobody.

PFC BERTUBIN
(into his radio)
All clear, sir!
(then under his breath)
--thank you, God.

BRADLEY (BLUE-1)

Hovermale squeezes the triggers on the coax. "Elric the Lord of Chaos" watches from his perch. Gauthier reports back.

1LT GAUTHIER
Eagle-6, Blue-1, we're clear.

PSY-OPS TEAM

changes tunes, switching to heavy metal. We hear AD/DC's *"Thunderstruck."*

THE ACE

continues plowing forward, BUSTING THROUGH THE SECOND BERM. Once through, the combat earthmover puts it into reverse, quickly backing out, clearing the way for the formation.

"MAD MAX"

is ready to lead his tanks through.

CPT LANCASTER
Skog, MOVE OUT! Battlestations,
battlestations, this is Eagle-6,
execute the breech, follow my move!

They pull out fast, leading Eagle's tanks in column through the breech. They cross the sandy approach, then funnel through the five foot wide bulldozed path. Lancaster sees something bizarre--

BART SIMPSON

moons the vehicles pouring through the berm. His cartoon picture has been PAINTED on MRE CRATES lashed together. *"Hey Saddam, kiss my ass! Welcome to Iraq. 2nd ACR"*

CPT LANCASTER
What the hell?

EAGLE'S TANKS

bust through and resume the wedge. The formation is one continuous flow of movement. The last scout platoon to come through -- same platoon who initially secured the berm -- catches up, racing forward through the tanks, and resuming the "scouts lead movement formation."

JASON KICK

drives his Bradley like a bat outta hell, while speaking into the tape recorder.

PFC KICK
I'm so damn scared, Mama, all I can do is hold on to the wheel--

CUT TO:

EXT. EAGLE TROOP - NIGHT

Night has fallen over the Iraq desert. Eagle Troop has stopped for the night. M1A1 tanks are parked in a lager, a circular defensive position, guntubes oriented east, toward the enemy.

BRADLEY (BLUE-1)

"Elric" watches over the Troopers, bedding down for the night, sleeping in nooks & crannies inside the Bradley. A restless SGT HOVERMALE lies inside his sleeping bag, talking, scaring the crew.

SGT HOVERMALE
You didn't take the shot?

JASON KICK
It's experimental, I don't want 'em injecting nerve gas into my system, I don't care how small the dose is.

SGT HOVERMALE
What if Saddam decides to go out in a blaze of glory, scuds droppin' everywhere, full of nerve gas, maybe bio-weapons, anthrax, botuninum toxin, I mean, what if Saddam wants to take everybody with him? I would.

JASON KICK
(frightened)
You really think Iraq would do that?

1LT GAUTHIER
Shut up, Hovermale. Everybody just keep your Mopp Suits zipped. Get some sleep. We're going to need it.

CUT TO:

EXT. "MAD MAX" - LATER

It's pitch black. TROOPERS are stirring. H.R. LANCASTER rises from his gunner's seat, where he spent the night. He rubs his sore ass, looks at his WRISTWATCH. 0325 hours. Time to get up. He climbs out of the turret hatch, stares at the Iraqi sky.

H.R. pulls a PHOTOGRAPH of his wife Katie and their two daughters from his shirt pocket. Borrows a CHEMSTICK clipped to the hatch for light. The 28-year-old Captain grimaces, slips the photo back in his pocket.

M1 TANK (WHITE-1)

SPC Newton sits on the front deck, devouring a MRE meal. A box contains food in foil packets. Not bad. The lanky Canadian, 1LT "Bullwinkle" Hamilton stands, taking his new DENTURES out, and cleaning them. They can see COLONEL DOBBS standing at the point, waving his GPS at the sky.

1LT HAMILTON
Dyin' to try these new Army issue chompers on a T-bone.

SPC NEWTON
Why aren't we movin' out, sir? What's the Colonel doin' now?

1LT HAMILTON
Navigating, prayin' to the GPS God right now, tryin' to catch a satellite, but it looks like none are bitin'.

M1 TANK (COUGAR-6)

Colonel Dobbs is holding up a thin green INSTRUMENT to the sky, a GPS (global positioning system), about the size of a hardback book. The digital display doesn't seem to be functioning. Lancaster steps up.

CPT LANCASTER
Can I help you with that, sir?

COL DOBBS
I can do it, thank you. Oh, Captain, who in this Troop do I have to speak with to make sure Eagle does not exceed the limit of advance again today?

Lancaster grimaces, here it comes again.

CPT LANCASTER
That would be me, sir.

EXT. BRADLEY (RED-4)

TROOPERS are helping each other put on the dreaded MOPP chemical protection suits. First the charcoal liners, then the bulky outer suits, the gloves, and boot covers. PFC's Frazer & Bertubin bitch to SGT Dolan.

PFC FRAZER
Fuckin' MOPP suits--

PFC BERTUBIN
--feel like I'm Neil Armstrong, Joe Star Trooper, some shit like that, bullshit way to fight a war.

SSG Bob Patterson is slipping the covers over his boots.

SSG PATTERSON
You guys do know mustard gas literally melts your lungs from the inside and you end up drownin' in your own blood?

This stops the guys from bitching. They seal their suits tight.

SGT DOLAN
Exactly what Saddam used against Iran. Waited until the enemy massed, and that's when he dropped the gas. Wiped out tens of thousands.

PFC BERTUBIN
(frightened)
Saddam really did that?

EXT. EAGLE TROOP - DAWN

As the sun rises, Eagle Troop is rolling across the featureless desert, scouts in the lead.

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster rides up in the hatch. The loader, SPC Taylor is fidgeting, breathing hard, nervously cracking his knuckles. Lancaster shoots him a look. Taylor immediately stops, clasping his hands together. H.R. knows he has a problem.

BRADLEY (RED-4)

SSG Patterson studies the sandscape. Suddenly PFC Bertubin screams out.

PFC BERTUBIN
GAS, GAS, GAS!

Cut to a HATCH OPENING, and the DESERT DOG thrown outside. Poor "HAM SLICES" wanders around, a canary in a coal mine, trying to sniff a way back inside the Bradley. From inside, the soldiers anxiously look out the periscopes at the sacrificial mutt.

SGT DOLAN
Hey, it's cool. Ham Slices is still breathing, looking for some chow.

SSG PATTERSON
Shit, another false alarm, somebody haul in the damn dog.

EXT. EAGLE TROOP - NIGHT

The sun has set. The night is clear. Eagle Troop is stopped for refuel. Huge fuel trucks pump gas into the armored vehicles.

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster is up in his turret when it comes over the radio.

1LT GAUTHIER (RADIO)
Eagle-6, this is Blue, Hovermale reports a hot spot moving southwest at 37 degrees, about five K's out.

BRADLEY (BLUE-1)

SGT Hovermale has his eyeball to the thermals. Elric above him. The gunner sees a glowing white HEAT SIGNATURE moving in the distance.

SGT HOVERMALE
Yeah, about 4500 meters, something's moving alright, looks like an enemy vehicle using the terrain to mask his movement.

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster wants it for himself.

CPT LANCASTER
Move out, Skog. We'll maneuver around to the left to check it out.

The M1 powers forward, zooming full speed through the sand.

CPT LANCASTER
Blue-1, Eagle-6, don't lose that contact, I'm coming up around. Green, continue to refuel. White, go to Redcon 1. Stand by for orders.

BRADLEY (BLUE-1)

Both 1LT Gauthier and SGT Hovermale follow the heat signature -- which passes leisurely in and out of view -- moving along the dunes. Gauthier traverses, spots MAD MAX moving forward to intercept.

1LT GAUTHIER
I got it, presently moving north,
maybe a scout track, careful, Eagle-6,
you're coming right in on it.

"MAD MAX"

roars across the dunes. Inside, the gunner, SGT Craig Koch is scanning with his thermals, his hands on the trigger. He keeps wiping the sweat of his palms. Everybody is anxious, twitchy, their first taste of actual combat.

CPT LANCASTER
Taylor, load heat.

Taylor is fighting nerves, his hands shaking.

CPT LANCASTER
Taylor!

The loader slams the 120 round into the main gun's breech.

PFC TAYLOR
Up.

SGT KOCH
Identified! Armored vehicle!

Koch lases the target. The computer reads 2300 meters. Everybody looks at Lancaster, waiting for the fire order. He's up in the turret with night-vision binoculars, which illuminate the night in a colorless vision.

CPT LANCASTER
(annoyed)
AW SHIT! -- hold it up, check fire.

PFC TAYLOR
What?

A CAMEL

strolls lazily through the dunes.

SGT KOCH

pulls away from his thermal sights.

SGT KOCH
It's a fuckin' camel.

We hear laughter over the radio net.

CPT LANCASTER
Great fuckin' ambush, guys.

BRADLEY (BLUE-1)

Tim Gauthier isn't quite sure if Hovermale is kidding.

1LT GAUTHIER
No, Hovermale, you cannot shoot the camel, okay?

CUT TO:

EXT. EAGLE TROOP - NIGHT

The company is STOPPED.

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster is frustrated, drinking coffee, looking at his map.

LANCASTER
This is ridiculous, why the hell does Regiment keep stopping us? We're only a 115 kilometers in, we should be moving!

BRADLEY (RED-3)

SSG Bob Patterson is scouting forward of Eagle Troop. The crusty veteran sergeant has his eyeball to the thermals.

SSG PATTERSON
Think I'm picking up something--

THERMALS

We begin to see distinct trench lines, built in a triangular fashion with rifle squads entrenched at each point of the triangle.

SSG PATTERSON (OS)
--Looks like infantry. And lots of 'em.

ENEMY TRENCHLINE

We see a platoon of IRAQI SOLDIERS waiting in the desert night. They see nothing to cause them alarm.

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster snaps his head around.

1LT PETSCHEK (RADIO)
--Red-4 reports they're established at OP31 far left front of the Troop. Continuing to observe, over.

CPT LANCASTER
Red-1, this is six, bring up a section
and follow my move! Skog, MOVE OUT!

DRIVER'S COMPARTMENT

Hedonskog puts down his *X-Man* COMIC BOOK, sticks his BUBBLEGUM on the wall, and steps on the gas!

LANCASTER

is on his thermals as the TANK LUNGES FORWARD.

CPT LANCASTER
Taylor, battle carry heat!

The loader hits the foot pedal, opening the ammunition blast door. He grabs a 120mm tank round, and slams it into the main gun.

PFC TAYLOR
Up!

BRADLEY (EAGLE/RED-3)

Bob Patterson's vehicle is well forward of the others. He's getting itchy, making his gunner very nervous. The dog, Ham Slices, senses something is up, and finds a spot to hide. A nervous PFC Bertubin wonders what the dog knows.

SSG PATTERSON
I say knock the hell out of them,
let 'em know we're not the people
you wanna screw with tonight.

"MAD MAX"

leads three Bradley scouts forward, nearly invisible in the darkness, the winds masking their engine noise.

CPT LANCASTER
Close to about 1600 meters, keep
out of their anti-tank range.

ENEMY TRENCHLINE

One IRAQI SOLDIER stands, suddenly looking straight at Patterson's Bradley.

BRADLEY (EAGLE/RED-3)

Bob Patterson watches through his thermals. He sees the Iraqi soldier looking right at him, then pick up a shoulder ROCKET LAUNCHER (RPG).

SSG PATTERSON
I got one looking right at me, maybe
800 meters, he's picking up an RPG.

CPT LANCASTER (RADIO)
Well -- you'll have to kill him.

The enemy FIRE AK-47 assault rifles at the Bradley, doing nothing more than scratching the paint.

SSG PATTERSON
The bastards are scratchin' my paint!
Watch this. Gunner, HEIT troops!

Dolan opens up with 25mm HEIT (high explosive incendiary tracer) rounds. Poom, poom, poom -- impacting like hand grenades. Other Bradleys join in peppering the trenchline.

ENEMY TRENCHLINE

The effect on human tissue is devastating, gruesome, bodies torn limb from limb. The Iraqi shouldering the RPG simply VANISHES in a pink cloud.

SGT DOLAN
Oh God -- he blew up...

BRADLEY (EAGLE/RED 3)

Adrenaline charged, Patterson surveys the carnage, as his gunner keeps firing.

SSG PATTERSON
You bust a round at me and miss,
kiss your ass goodbye, 'cause I'm
gonna get you!

"MAD MAX"

After ten years of training, H.R. Lancaster has waited for this moment.

CPT LANCASTER
Gunner heat bunker!

Koch lases the target. 1600 meters. The firing computer automatically calculates the solution.

SGT KOCH
Identified!

CPT LANCASTER
FIRE!

Koch squeezes the trigger. The main gun recoils, the 65 ton tank shuddering, the spent metal cap ejecting out of the breech. Gunpowder clouds the turret.

SGT KOCH
ON THE WAY!

ENEMY TRENCHLINE

goes up in a FIREBALL, bodies flying, ammunition detonating, secondary explosions punctuating the kill. The WHITE FLAGS start coming up.

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster grins at his gunner.

CPT LANCASTER
If it takes a toothpick, use a baseball bat.

The M1 tank races up to the trenchline. A few survivors stagger forward, throw down their weapons, hands on top of their heads.

LANCASTER

dismounts his M1 Abrams. The Bradleys are right behind him. The Captain grabs a surrendering Iraqi. Puts his sidearm to the POW's head.

CPT LANCASTER
What division you from?

The prisoner has no idea what Lancaster is saying.

CPT LANCASTER
Adnan? Hammurabi? Tawakalna? Medina? Huh?

But the terrified Iraqi breaks down crying, begging, a pitiful display. Lancaster has no patience for this, shoving the POW over with the others.

CPT LANCASTER
These sorry fucks sure as hell aren't Republican Guard.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAGLE TROOP - NIGHT

The vehicles are in a lager.

"MAD MAX"

SGT Koch is in a sleeping bag on a cot beside his M1 Abrams, when suddenly he looks up, sees--

HUNDREDS OF IRAQIS

approaching on foot.

KOCH

scrambles up the tank, grabbing the M62 MACHINE GUN mounted on the

turret, and swings it around! LANCASTER pops up through the turret hatch.

CPT LANCASTER
Check fire -- they're surrendering.

THE IRAQIS

wave WHITE FLAGS and begin CHEERING the Americans.

SURRENDERING IRAQIS
George Bush is great man, great man!
Saddam no good, George Bush great!

These pathetic soldiers are starving, uniforms in rags, many barefoot. Thrilled to be captured, many kneel down, sobbing, praying to Allah for this salvation.

EAGLE TROOPERS

sit the POWs down, searching them for weapons, razor blades in wallets, etc.

Lancaster walks among the prisoners. A POW falls at the Commander's feet, kisses his hand, pulls out a wallet with photos of his family. Lancaster brushes past the prisoner, dumbfounded by the poor condition of these Iraqi soldiers.

SSG Willie Burns leads his men passing out MREs and bottled water, which the prisoners devour. PFC Kick searches a POW, finds small pieces disgusting MOLDY GREEN PITA bread in his pocket.

PFC KICK
(shocked)
You've been eating this?

The POW kisses his hands. Speaks fairly good English.

IRAQI POW #1
I was school teacher in Basra,
soldiers knock on my door, say you
coming with us, take me into the
desert, and give me rifle. They
threaten me, say death squads catch
me if I run away, kill my family.

Another POW digs into an MRE, makes a face over his package of BBQ pork.

IRAQI POW #2
No eat pork!

SSG Willie Burns shoves this ungrateful POW on his butt.

SSG BURNS
Then you ain't hungry enough.

EXT. EAGLE TROOP - DAWN

moves out under the morning sky. They pass through the GHASTLY REMAINS of last night's skirmish with Iraqi infantry. This is Eagle's first sight of enemy dead, perhaps forty bodies, few of them in one piece.

"MAD MAX"

The crew is repulsed at the sight. Lancaster tries not to show emotion. PFC Taylor's mouth drops open.

PFC TAYLOR
(horrified)
Oh God..., Jesus--

CPT LANCASTER
C'mon, Taylor, suck it up, man.

COMMAND POST BRADLEY (COUGAR-3)

Willie Burns rides up in the turret hatch, grimly surveying the carnage. His gunner, SGT Holloway nearly gags, turns his head away.

SGT BURNS
They lost, know what I mean?

BRADLEY (EAGLE/BLUE-1)

Timothy Hovermale surveys without emotion. We zoom in on the evil fanged skull of "Elric," watching from his perch.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAGLE TROOP - NIGHT

A torrential RAIN is flooding Eagle Troop, stopped again for the night. We see only florescent chemlights and silhouettes of tanks, water pouring off them, flowing over the sand. Freezing troopers cocooned in panchos try to sleep on cots under tarps strung off their tracks.

BRADLEY (RED-4)

The crew is trying unsuccessfully to sleep.

SSG PATTERSON
How can it rain so damn hard in
the middle of a fuckin' desert?

DRIVER'S COMPARTMENT

Water is seeping through his closed hatch. Soaked to the bone in his filthy MOPP chemical suit, Jason Kick dictates in a slow drawl.

PFC KICK
It's seepin' in everywhere. I can feel it in my underwear, I'm tellin' you, mama, this ain't the Army they were sellin' in those TV commercials--

We hear FOOTSTEPS. Lots of them. People are climbing up, walking on top of his Bradley. PFC Kick freezes, scared, this shouldn't be happening. His hatch is closed. He checks his viewer scopes, sees the legs and boots of SOLDIERS climbing up on his Bradley!

PFC KICK
JESUS! Somebody's out there!
(clicks the intercom)
SIR! We got soldiers, lots of them, they're climbing up our track!

INT. BRADLEY (RED-4)

Everybody HEARS the footsteps now. Ham Slices barks!

SSG PATTERSON
SOMEBODY'S UP THERE! Shit, shit, whada we fuckin' do?

COMMAND TRACK BRADLEY (BLACK-3)

Full panic! 1LT Hillen traverses the turret, aims his THERMAL SIGHTS, and makes out 5 WHITE GLOWING BODIES climbing up the track.

1LT HILLEN
Looks like five of 'em!

SSG BURNS
Red-4, close your hatches, I'll coax 'em!

SSG PATTERSON (RADIO)
Roger, do it, get 'em the fuck off me!

1LT HILLEN
Gunner coax troops!

But Willie Burns HESITATES.

SSG BURNS
I dunno, sir--

1LT HILLEN
FIRE, DAMMIT!

Burns still won't fire.

SSG BURNS
They know their way around, sir, they know the handholds, know where to step, I'm thinkin' these are our guys.

1LT HILLEN
WHAT?

"MAD MAX"

Water seeps in through the hatches. It drips over the rack of radios buzzing far-off voices and static. Drips on H.R. LANCASTER curled up below, who looks miserable, sleeping in the turret. Craig Koch is shaking him.

CPT LANCASTER
--nearly fratted WHO?

SGT KOCH
Some guys from Killer Troop got lost, started crawling over Patterson's Bradley, scared the shit out of 'em.

CPT LANCASTER
Nobody hurt?

SGT KOCH
No.

Lancaster tries to get comfortable, a losing proposition inside a tank.

CPT LANCASTER
Then wake me in two hours.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAGLE TROOP - DAWN

Ugly conditions. High winds. Sand flooded with last night's rain. An M1 turbine ENGINE whines like a jet. Lancaster mixes instant coffee in his steel cup, sets it on the exhaust grill of his $2.6 million coffeemaker.

2/26/91 - Day Four

The coffee superheats in seconds! Lancaster takes a sip. Tries to get warm. He looks at Major MacBriar, tearing into a MRE hot off the exhaust grill.

CPT LANCASTER
That's your second breakfast.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Standing here jerking off makes me hungry.

Dobbs stands nervously, looking off into the heavy fog.

COL DOBBS
The 60 Easting, absolutely no further. With the Air Cav grounded, we're going to have little or no warning as it is.

Lancaster slugs down his coffee, throws out the rest.

CPT LANCASTER
Either will they, sir.

MacBriar tosses the remains of his MRE to Ham Slices. The officers walk off, past privates Bertubin & Frazier, busy stowing gear into their Bradley. Poor Charley Bertubin is incredibly tense, his hands shaking.

PFC BERTUBIN
(frightened)
Couldn't sleep with all that rain. My chemical suit's soaked, hope it still works.

PFC FRAZIER
Fuckin' better. Everybody says this is the day. We're close, real close.

We tighten on Bertubin's eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. GHOST TROOP - DAWN

The SANDSTORM obscures Ghost Troop moving fullclip toward the 56 Easting. The Scouts are out front, tanks held in the rear.

"Ghost Troop"

"THE GODFATHER"

is stenciled over Ghost Troop Commander's tank. Captain JOE SARTIANO, the handsome Sicilian, is up in his hatch, racing across the bleak, flat, muddy-sand landscape -- visibility dimming as the soaked earth warms to vapor.

SARTIANO
This is Ghost-6, scouts keep sharp, stay on your thermals. The choppers are grounded. We're on our own out here.

BRADLEY (GHOST/BLUE-1)

The gunner, SGT Steve Wunder, sees something in his thermals.

SGT WUNDER
Sir... think you ought to see this.

The gunner pulls back, as 1LT Paul Hains looks into the thermal sights. He sees four soupy white heat signatures moving perpendicular to Ghost's advance. The blobs vanish in the distance, perhaps hidden behind dunes.

FOUR IRAQI MTLB

scout vehicles cruise through the dunes on a recon patrol.

"THE GODFATHER"

Sartiano cannot see 100 feet from his hatch.

1LT HAINS (RADIO)
Ghost-6, this is Blue-1, I've got four tracked vehicles moving south to north at a range of 2300 meters. Can't identify.

The Commander is immediately scanning with his thermals.

CPT SARTIANO
Blue-1, roger, anybody else got 'em?

IRAQI MTLB

The IRAQI LIEUTENANT traverses his periscope, scanning the desert in 3x magnification, blinded by the sandstorm. He can't see much. Until suddenly he gets a sense. But there's too many of them. No, it couldn't be--

IRAQI LT
(Arabic w/ English subtitles)
Gunner, put some 50 calibre at 3:00 o'clock. Let's see if something's out there.

BRADLEY (GHOST/RED-6)

SGG Chaffee, eyes pressed to the thermal sights, sees the Tawakalna scout vehicles glowing bright white.

SSG CHAFFE
Identified, four enemy MTLBs!

Suddenly sees little FLASHING SPECKS of light. He's amazed.

SSG CHAFFE
Sonofabitch..., they're shooting at us!

The gunner, SGT Nels Moller from Idaho, still waiting, responds politely.

SGT MOLLER
Well, Sergeant -- would you like to tell me where they are?

SSG CHAFFE
OH SHIT, traverse right! There, there you go -- got the target?

Moller OPENS UP with 25mm chain gun. Each HEIT high explosive incendiary round is devastating, impacting like hand grenades, ripping through the thin-skinned enemy vehicles.

BRADLEY (GHOST/BLUE-1)

1LT Paul Hain's Bradley is stopped, ERECTING THE TOW LAUNCHER. Five other Bradleys come on line, all preparing to fire.

1LT HAINS
Blue, this is Blue-1. One TOW missile, enemy MTLBs at my command.

IRAQI MTLB

The American's chain gun rounds tear up the Scout vehicles. The Iraqi Lieutenant ducks low, flames in the cabin, screaming orders--

IRAQI LT
(Arabic w/ English subtitles)
Drive for the dunes!

BRADLEY (GHOST/BLUE-1)

The TOW systems check flashes *"Ready."*

SGT WUNDER
Up!

1LT HAINS
Fire TOW now!

The MISSILE LEAPS FROM THE LAUNCHER in a shower of sparks. It fires the first of a PLATOON SALVO of wire guided missiles. SGT Wunder works the joystick, guiding the golf ball dancing up & down on his VIDEOSCREEN.

SGT WUNDER
On the way! C'mon..., c'mon...

1LT HAINS
You're too high! You're too high!

At the last possible second the gunner drops the stick, forcing the guided missile down into an open hatch. A FIREBALL bounces along the dunes.

THE THREE MTLBS

erupt into flames, one after the next, TOWs hitting their marks. Survivors hurry out, only to be eaten up by 25mm, and staggering around holding in their guts.

THERMAL SIGHTS

show the heat signature of what can only be a SOLDIER trying to stuff his falling intestines back into his belly.

SGT MOLLER

jerks his head away from the sights in disgust.

SGT MOLLER
Oh..., God..., they're eaten up pretty bad, sir. Maybe we should get some medics out there?

"THE GODFATHER"

Sartiano is moving up with his Scouts.

SSG CHAFFE (RADIO)
Six, this is Red-5, request permission to go out there and render first aid and gather intelligence.

CPT SARTIANO
Negative, one, stay where you are, stay where you are! We have one MTLB getting away into Eagle's sector!

THE LAST MTLB

scout vehicle is getting away, taking cover behind some dunes.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAGLE TROOP - SAME

is stopped, preparing to move out.

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster looking at a map with his platoon leaders, bumming a chew from a mortarman, when his gunner yells out.

SSG KOCH
Sir! Ghost's fired up some BMPs, Patterson reports one coming our way!

CPT LANCASTER
Roger -- Tell Patterson to wait!
Skog, fire it up! My 'ol Westpoint
pal Sartiano's sent us a present.

Lancaster scrambles up his M1, and drops down into the turret hatch.
"Mad Max" immediately races up beside SSG Patterson's Bradley.

LAST IRAQI MTLB

is getting away. Fire extinguishers put out the flames. The Lieutenant
is frantically scanning for enemy, screaming for his men to get off a message.

IRAQI LT
(Arabic w/ English subtitles)
Radio the Division! Tell them we're
in contact, large enemy forces--

"MAD MAX"

SGT Koch slaves the crosshairs on the moving MTLB. Lases the target. The
readout says 2620 meters. Lancaster is like a kid on Christmas morning.

CPT LANCASTER
Red-4, this is Eagle-6, does that
MTLB have my name on it?

SGT PATTERSON (RADIO)
Roger, your name's written all over
that sonofabitch.

SSG PATTERSON

Patterson drops down into his Bradley--

SSG PATTERSON
Wait a minute, WAIT, lemme get down
in this thing!

--and is reaching for the hatch, as Lancaster's M1 TANK FIRES -- the main
gun's concussion blasting sand over him.

IRAQI MTLB

blows sky high. Nothing left but the flames.

"MAD MAX"

The gunner clenches a fist!

SGT KOCH
TARGET!

As the gunner & loader highfive, Lancaster remains quiet, his mind racing.

LANCASTER
(worried)
You think he had time to report
our position?

Lancaster notices Taylor just standing, watching.

LANCASTER
TAYLOR, don't just stand there,
load another round!

Taylor snaps out of it, jumps down to load the empty guntube.

TAYLOR
(amazed at the kill)
Damn, sir.

BRADLEY (EAGLE/RED-4)

The dog hides behind some gear. SGT Bob Patterson spits sand.

SSG PATTERSON
Thanks for the fuckin' dust storm.

CUT TO:

EXT. REGIMENTAL COMMAND HQ - DAY

Buffeted by the raging shamal, a BLACKHAWK HELICOPTER carrying LT GEN FRED FRANKS has trouble landing at Regimental TOC. COL DON HOLDER walks out into the whipping rain to greet his Corp Commander.

Regimental Tactical Operations Center

COL HOLDER
(salutes)
Always ready, sir!

They hurry into the Regimental TOC. Fred Franks walks with a limp on his artificial leg. He is the classic post Vietnam officer. Physically maimed, traumatized by defeat, inclined to wait before making a decision.

LTG FRANKS
Don, General Schwarzkopf says the
Iraqi's are preparing to withdraw.
What do you think?

INT. REGIMENTAL TOC

As the two men walk inside, the TOC is called to attention.

COL HOLDER
Steve, show General Franks where the Regiment is.

Steve Robinette begins to brief as he hands Franks a cup of coffee.

LTCOL ROBINETTE
Sir, we are deployed along this line in direct fire contact with the enemy. Thus far, we have pushed forward here, here, and here. There is no doubt some of the enemy is retreating, but in this deteriorating weather it will be difficult to stop them.

LTG FRANKS
Don, you understand that I want to concentrate the Corps for a decisive blow.

LTC MARCY walks in wet and tired.

COL HOLDER
Sir, the 3rd Squadron Commander has just arrived, he can provide us with a fresh assessment.

LTC MARCY
(not enthusiastic)
The Troops are tired, sir. In this rain and poor visibility, it's going to get harder and harder to tell friend from foe. We had some problems last night -- six KIA.

This comment gets Fred Franks attention. All look to the General. Standing on his crippled leg, the General nods silently, and walks slowly to the MAP on the operations center wall. He stares intently at the SYMBOLS for the 2ND CAVALRY REGIMENT on the map.

CUT TO:

EXT. EAGLE TROOP - DAY

Eagle is stopped again for refuel, nearly invisible in the raging storm. Fuel Trucks pump diesel. We pan to a HEMMIT TRUCK resupplying ammunition. The 19-year-old private from Wichita, "BATTLE," offloads TOW missiles to Jason Kick in Patterson's Bradley. Ham Slices runs around barking.

PFC BATTLE
Keep it up, 2nd Cav! You guys are doing great! I got thermite grenades, take 'em, plenty to go around!

"TACTICAL COMMAND" BRADLEY

The picture of ROMMEL hangs inside the Tactical Operations Center. Dobbs, Lancaster, MacBriar. Hillen, & Burns are gathered for the frag order.

1LT HILLEN
This is Cougar-5 standing by, over.

REGIMENT COMMAND (RADIO)
Situation: Enemy forces continue to defend Kuwait to the east between the seven zero and eight zero eastings. Friendly forces, the 1st Infantry & 7th Corps are closing on Regiment's rear and are prepared to assume battle hand-over from 2nd ACR.

H.R. & MacBriar can't believe what they are hearing.

REGIMENT COMMAND (RADIO)
Mission: 2nd Squadron defends in current position and prepares to assist the forward passage of 1st Infantry. Be prepared to assume core reserve.

CPT LANCASTER
CORPS RESERVE? What shit is this?

COL DOBBS
Quiet, Lancaster!

REGIMENT COMMAND (RADIO)
Engineers will move forward to prepare defensive positions, with priority to Second Squadron. Acknowledge.

1LT HILLEN
This is Cougar-32, roger, over.

CPT LANCASTER
All this way just to dig in?

COL DOBBS
We've gotten some great training, this is probably for the best--

CPT LANCASTER
(interrupting)
Sir, this can't be happening! I can't believe we're going into reserve!

COL DOBBS
Calm down, Captain, we've located their security belt and now it's 1st Division's mission to finish the job.

CPT LANCASTER
(temper red-lining)
Dammit, sir, we haven't even seen an enemy T72 yet! This is ridiculous! How do we know where their main defenses are -- or even if they can fight?

COL DOBBS
We've done what we needed to do. Now we will prepare a defensive position. See to it immediately.

Momentarily forgetting his rank, Lancaster glares at Dobbs.

CPT LANCASTER
Guess you're off the hook.

COL DOBBS
What's that supposed to mean?

CPT LANCASTER
You won't be tested in combat.
(an afterthought)
--sir.

Dobbs tightens in anger and embarrassment. Lancaster realizes he crossed the line. MacBriar steps between them.

MAJ MACBRIAR
That'll be all, Captain!
(Lancaster doesn't move)
You have your orders. See to them.

Lancaster exits. MacBriar looks at Willie Burns & 1LT Hillen, who share a look of trepidation..

MAJ MACBRIAR
Give us a moment, please.

Willie Burns nods, quickly ushering Hillen outside.

SSG BURNS
(quietly to Hillen)
When the dust settles, it's what's on your collar that matters.

Now only Dobbs & MacBriar remain. The Squadron Commander is fuming.

COL DOBBS
You realize I can have him court marshaled for insubordination.

MAJ MACBRIAR
(pleading his case)
We haven't slept, everybody's under enormous stress, sir. Captain Lancaster has trained every moment of his adult life for battle. He's not like us, sir. He's his own soldier in his own time. And now this....

The Squadron Commander takes a deep breath.

COL DOBBS
One more incident and Lancaster is relieved.

EXT. "EAGLE TROOP"

Lancaster walks oblivious to the raging sandstorm. He's hit the depth of depression. MacBriar catches up, whips him around.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Jesus, H.R., don't be stupid! I can't afford to have you relieved of duty, damn you. You've got to push it aside, keep the troop peaked.

CPT LANCASTER
Sir, I'm sorry, but you know damn well Eagle is ready to deal.

Lancaster salutes, then turns and storms away.

The Major and everybody else know better than to mess with him now -- all except the eager artilleryman, Danny Davis, who catches up.

2LT DAVIS
(to Lancaster)
So we're done, this is it?

CPT LANCASTER
(blowing up)
NO, THIS ISN'T IT, DAMN IT! Jesus, Danny, what're you thinking saying shit like that! Everybody keep the edge. We're not out of the fight yet!

EXT. "TACTICAL COMMAND" BRADLEY

Willie Burns pulls MacBriar aside--

SGT BURNS
Sir, may not matter anymore, but when we were doing the intel on those MTLBs Ghost Troop shot up, we found this Soviet 7.62.

Pulls a tarp off a Soviet 7.62 MACHINE GUN, usually mounted on a tank turret.

SGT BURNS
Found 3000 rounds to go with it.

The Major kneels down, admiring the craftsmanship.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Get it mounted on my tank.

SGT BURNS
What's the point, sir, I mean, with all this regimental bullshit knockin' us out?

MAJ MACBRIAR
(winks)
Just do it, William.

CUT TO:

EXT. COALITION FORCES OPERATIONS CENTER - DAY

The DUTY OFFICER looks at VII Corps positions on the wall map. We see Republican Guard positions. Reading new intel, the Duty Officer moves the "RG" symbols, to show four of the six elite Iraqi divisions are retreating.

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Coalition Forces Operations Center

The doors burst open and SCHWARZKOPF strides in followed by a gaggle of aides and staff officers. Everyone is called to attention.

GEN SCHWARZKOPF
Show me VII Corps current limit of advance.

DUTY OFFICER
Sir, the 2nd Cavalry Regiment is along this line and the divisions are about six to twelve hours behind them.

Called by many a tyrannt, Schwarzkopf's volcanic temper erupts!

GEN SCHWARZKOPF
(screaming)
GODDAMM SONOFABITCHES! 7th Corps was there 24 hours ago! The Iraqi's are pulling out and the Corps isn't moving. General Franks can't make a decision if his pants are on fire. Get Franks on the line NOW!

An AIDE rushes to hand the General a PHONE. General Franks is on the other end.

GEN SCHWARZKOPF
What in God's name are you doing, Freddie? The Iraqis are bugging out and you aren't moving? What the hell are you doing? GET ON WITH THE BATTLE!

EXT. VII CORPS COMMAND - NIGHT

The dignified, white-haired General Franks is on the phone with Schwarzkopf. Getting severely chewed out, all he can do is keep nodding.

LTG FRANKS
(listening)
Yes sir... Yes sir... Yes sir...

EXT. EAGLE TROOP - DAY

The Troop is still stopped.

"MAD MAX"

As Lancaster climbs up into the turret, SGT Koch yells to him.

SGT KOCH
Sir--

LANCASTER
Not now, Sergeant.

SGT KOCH
(hesitant)
--uhh, another frag order's coming.

CPT LANCASTER
Christ, what now...

HR hops down through the hatch, pulls on his CVC HELMET so he can hear over the radio net--

REGIMENT COMMAND (RADIO)
--I say again, change of mission.
The 2nd ACR will continue movement to
contact to the seventy easting, locate
and destroy enemy security elements--

CPT LANCASTER
FUCKIN'-A!

"TACTICAL COMMAND" BRADLEY

COL Dobbs eyes tighten.

COL DOBBS
(dryly)
This is Cougar-32, roger, over.

MacBriar straps on his kevlar, the big Scotsman grinning like a cat.

MAJ MACBRIAR
We have our orders, sir. I will
issue the frago immediately.

MacBriar winks at WILLIE BURNS as he walks out, leaving the Sergeant wondering how the hell the Major knew Regiment would change their mind.

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster translates the order as he's hearing it, adrenaline surging, sending an order out to his Troop.

CPT LANCASTER
Battlestations, battlestations,
this is Eagle-6, we attack in five
minutes to the seven zero easting.
Congratulations, men. This is the
moment we've all been working for!

BRADLEY (BLUE-1)

SGT Hovermale snaps up from his depression. Blue Platoon Leader Tim Gauthier calls in on the radio.

1LT GAUTHIER
Eagle-6, this is Blue-1, what kind
of contact can we expect?

CPT LANCASTER (RADIO)
Enemy contact.

Hovermale places "Elric" back up on his perch.

1LT GAUTHIER
(calmly)
Roger -- that's the best kind.

BRADLEY (RED-4)

PFC Bertubin is readying for the attack, fueling his Bradley. The terrified inter-collegiate wrestler from Florida mutters a mantra to himself.

PFC BERTUBIN
(muttering to himself)
--Suck it up, just do it, make 'em pay.
Suck it up, just do it, make 'em pay--

Patterson slaps him on the back, scares the hell out of Bertubin.

SSG PATTERSON
Let's get 'em, Bert!

CUT TO:

EXT. EAGLE TROOP - DAY

The vehicles plow through the FIFTY KNOT SANDSTORM. Conditions are hideous. Lancaster pops down into the turret. He clicks on the Troop radio net.

CPT LANCASTER
This is Eagle-6. Everybody stay loose, keep that edge. Stay on your thermals. I just got one thing to say--

Lancaster clears his throat, and after a pregnant pause, he starts SINGING an old West Point rugby song he's re-written.

CPT LANCASTER
(singing)
We're Eagle Troopers, scum of the Earth, born in a whorehouse, shit on, pissed on, kicked around the universe--

VARIOUS EAGLE TROOPERS

We quickly jump cut between all the Troopers, nobody believing what they are hearing over the radio net. Somehow this stupid song puts them at ease, giving everybody new strength.

CPT LANCASTER (RADIO)
--of all the sons of bitches, we are the worst, we are Eagle Troopers, scum of the Earth! Oh we are Eagle Troopers, who the fuck are you!
(end of song)
Let's go get 'em, guys! Remember your Regiment.

The Troopers all ROAR IN APPROVAL, cheering over the radio net!

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster is touched by their unanimous response.

EAGLE TROOP (RADIO)
(thunderously)
And Follow Your Officers!

"SID VICIOUS"

MacBriar has Scottish Bag Pipe music playing. SGT Abacrombie can't see anything in this shamal.

SGT ABACROMBIE
(nervous)
Rommel said never maneuver in a sandstorm. Think I'm finding out why.

MAJ MacBriar holds his GPS (global positioning system), size of a hardback novel, it reads "65 Easting."

MAJ MACBRIAR
Rommel didn't have satellites.

SGT ABACROMBIE
What if they crap out again. How'll we know when we've hit the objective?

MAJ MACBRIAR
(with a wink)
Because they'll be naked woman in cages waiting for us.

"TACTICAL COMMAND" BRADLEY (BLACK-3)

Cut to a luscious PLAYBOY CENTERFOLD is taped up over the fire control panel. SSG Willie Burns notices his gunner, Russell Holloway, is nervously running his thumbs along his fingertips.

SSG BURNS
Just remember, if you miss--

Burns pats the sexy butt of the playboy centerfold.

SSG BURNS
--<u>this</u> is what you're gonna miss.

M1 TANK (COUGAR-6)

COL Dobbs works his handheld GPS navigation device, trying to get a fix

on Eagle Troop.

COL DOBBS
Eagle-6, Cougar-6, you are to allow Bradley Scouts to the six seven easting, tanks to the six five.

CPT LANCASTER
Roger, but contact may be imminent, should our tanks really be two kilometers behind our scouts, over?

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster is furious at this bullshit order.

COL DOBBS (RADIO)
You don't know that. I say again, Bradleys to the six seven, tanks no further than the six five, acknowledge.

CPT LANCASTER
(a beat)
Eagle-6, roger.

Lancaster slams his fist against the hull.

CPT LANCASTER
Skog, you just stay on Patterson's ass. I'm getting a feeling...

CUT TO:

EXT. IRAQI DESERT - ALPHA TROOP - DAY

Just a few miles north of Eagle Troop and the 2nd Armored Cavalry, three platoons of Bradleys rumble eastward through the raging shamal.

Alpha Troop -- 3rd Armored Division
4th Squadron, 7th Cavalry.
Commander CPT Gerald Davie

Alpha Troop is guarding the Southern flank of the 3rd Armored Division. Commanding is a CPT GERALD DAVIE from Massachusetts, a West Point classmate of H.R. Lancaster.

CPT DAVIE'S BRADLEY

The sand is whipping, blasting over CPT Davie riding up in his hatch. The Troopers wear goggles, T-shirts and rags protecting their necks and faces from the raging sandstorm. Davie can only see 200 - 300 meters with the naked eye. His gunner, no more than 900 meters even with the thermal sights.

CPT DAVIE
(frustrated to his gunner)
Can't see shit, even with the thermals.
Visibility is down to 300 meters.

SSG SNEED (RADIO)
Six, this is 26, We have crunchies up
front! Iraqi infantry. And Iraqi BMPs!
I say again, I have BMPs to my front!

They crest a slight rise, when suddenly GUNFIRE rakes across the front slope panel of his Bradley. Directly ahead Davie suddenly sees the--

TAWAKALNA DIVISION,

heavily dug into defensive sand revettements. Six Soviet-made T-72 tanks and 18 BMPs (armored fighting vehicles) are hidden behind dirt mounds, waiting in ambush. This is the mighty Tawakalna Division of the Republican Guard.

CPT DAVIE'S BRADLEY

Looking through his THERMAL SIGHTS the gunner sees other crimson rectangular shapes.

DAVIE'S GUNNER
Getting hot spots, sir. BMPs!

CPT DAVIE
Then kill 'em!

The gunner starts firing 25mm high explosive rounds. Tracers fly in both directions. Davie sees the explosions from the enemy BMPs being hit.

CPT DAVIE
3rd and 2nd platoon shift into a
fighting line! 1st platoon stay
back as a reserve! Damn sandstorm,
I don't know what we've got here yet!

Their 13 Bradleys, six in each platoon, plus his own -- advance in an even line. In the swirling sand, CPT Davie can only see one or two vehicles to either side.

Suddenly the ENEMY IS EVERYWHERE!

IRAQI INFANTRY

fire pointblank from the left, close as 75 meters away. Soldiers are hiding in holes, little showing except their gun barrels. They make tiny targets.

IRAQI ARMORED POSITION #1

T-72 tanks attack from only 800 meters out, dead ahead of Alpha.

IRAQI ARMORED POSITION #2

More BMPs and T-72's fire main guns from the right flank, these armored tracks 300 - 600 meters away. Deep booms from tank guns are punctuated by the tongues of flame!

CPT DAVIE'S BRADLEY

Davie's gunner fires at what he can see in his thermals.

CPT DAVIE
TANKS DIRECT FRONT! Identify more to the right!

Davie immediately fires a RED STAR CLUSTER up into the dark stormy sky to mark their position, but the raging shamal blows the flare to the ground.

CPT DAVIE
Shit! Fuckin' wind took the flare!

Enemy ARTILLERY starts LANDING all around them. The shock waves rock the Bradleys, throwing up sand smashing into the armored steel. The TOW missile loader is frantic!

TOW LOADER
HOLY SHIT! You're up, man, shoot it, shoot--

But a TANK SHELL IMPACTS RIGHT BESIDE THE BRADLEY, the shock wave throwing the crew slamming against the turret.

THE BATTLEFIELD

Enemy infantry fire vigorously. Alpha Troop has no place to retreat. Within seconds the encounter is a full-blown firefight. Alpha is fighting for their lives, nobody fully realizing how badly they are into it.

BRADLEY (ALPHA-24)

The thermals are hot with crimson shapes. SGT KENNETH GENTRY slaves his sights over. Sees more enemy victors on his right flank.

SGT GENTRY
Christ, there's more of 'em, scan left, left dammit, SHOOT 'EM!

We HEAR the thump, thump, thump of 25mm.

SGT GENTRY
Target -- target!

The coax machine gun GOES DEAD.

SGT GENTRY
Coax is jammed! SHIT!

Commander RAYMOND EGAN works like hell to fix it. But the sonofabitch is jammed good. Egan peeks out his hatch, picks up Iraqi INFANTRY approaching--

SGT EGAN
We got crunchies two o'clock!
Use M-16's through the portholes!

--is the last thing Egan says, as a TANK SHELL SLICES INTO THE BRADLEY -- ripping across Gentry's lap, searing away his thighs, then tearing through Egan's lower left leg, before blowing out the other side of the hull! The EXPLOSION is ear shattering, shrapnel flying everywhere!

Smoke & fire in the blown out turret is quickly suppressed by halon. The driver's head is terribly burned. Frantic, surviving on adrenaline, he radios in!

ALPHA-24 DRIVER
WE'RE HIT! 24's hit! We need a medic! Both SGT Gentry & Egan are hurt really bad! SEND A MEDIC!

BRADLEY (ALPHA-26)

The driver witnesses the hit. Locking up, consumed by fear, he starts screaming over the radio net!

ALPHA-26 DRIVER
Oh SHIT! -- biggest dammed explosion at 12 o'clock! Oh God, looks like one of ours, oh my God, I CAN'T TELL who it is! Send a medic!

CPT DAVIE'S BRADLEY

The radio is chaotic, numerous voices screaming for help! In only moments, Captain Gerald Davie has seen his Troop reduced to sheer panic!

CPT DAVIE
MAINTAIN FOCUS! Clear the net! Two-four, this is six, a medic is on the way! Now shut the fuck up and get off the net!

SSG SNEED (RADIO)
TANKS, TANKS! Direct front and more to the right!

CPT Davie sees a Bradley fire a TOW MISSILE, the wire-guided rocket sizzling through the storm like a hot needle. It misses.

THE BATTLEFIELD

Alpha Troop is now stopped dead! Sitting ducks for the Republican Guard. The Bradleys are ten times too close to oppose tanks.

CPT DAVIE (RADIO)
(realizing the danger)
DO NOT STOP, Alpha! We're in their kill sack! FULL REVERSE!

Bradleys 25 and 26 move to approach the stricken Alpha-24, roaring in flames. Iraqi Infantrymen, now less than 50 meters away, fire at the rescuers. T-72 tank rounds are just missing over the Bradley turrets, machine gun fire whipping past.

BRADLEY (ALPHA-26)

Sergeant Major RONALD SNEED, short & thickset, a Vietnam veteran, races forward to help evacuate Alpha-24. His gunner sprays the enemy trenchline with 25mm cannon shells. Sneed is visibly shaken, anger boiling over with anger.

SGT SNEED
Fire up the troops. Keep 'em off that Bradley! Kill the motherfuckers!

Milky smoke pours out of crippled Alpha-24 as the rescue Bradley closes in--

--when a TANK ROUND HITS THEM! Violently slams SSG Sneed to into his weapons panel!

CPT DAVIE'S BRADLEY

Too far away to see in this driving sand, CPT Davie cannot raise Alpha 25 & 26 on his radio, the net jammed with pleas for medics.

CPT DAVIE
Alpha 25, Alpha 26, acknowledge!

BURNING BRADLEY (ALPHA-24)

A medic, SPC BRYAN MOORE, jumps into the sand, running for the stricken Bradley as Iraqi tracer rounds whiz past.

SPC Moore ENTERS the burning wreckage, searching for survivors. Finds the RADIOS MELTED, heat from the blast incredible. Finds Gentry dead, hopelessly wedged into the gnarled steel. He keeps searching, finds EGAN, throwing him over his shoulder, and carrying him outside.

SGT EGAN
Where's Gentry's body? Bring his body, everybody goes home, everybody! You go back and GET HIM!

SPC MOORE
I can't get him out! We need the torch!

BRADLEY (ALPHA-33)

The commander, SGT JAMES STRONG, is screaming over the net--

SGT STRONG
Christ! What do we do now?

--when the track is HIT by a 1.45 round from an Iraqi machine gun. It penetrates the turret, ricochets off the radio, and HITS SGT STRONG IN THE HIP. He collapses in bloody agony.

The gunner, CRP EFREM ZIMBALIST EVANS, picks himself up, grabs the radio, and OPENS FIRE with his 25mm cannons, while summoning help.

CRP EVANS
This is 33, SGT Strong's been hit and he's bleeding bad! We need a medic! We need a medic now!

CPT DAVIE'S BRADLEY

The battle is growing desperate. The radio net is a chaotic cry for medics, frenzied screams of terrified soldiers in agony. People excited. Hard to understand what anybody is saying.

CPT DAVIE
(shocked)
MAINTAIN FOCUS, DAMMIT!
Or we're all gonna eat it!

BRADLEY (ALPHA-36)

Fighting on Davie's right flank, the 25mm chain gun suddenly QUITS on SGT DICK DUGGAN from Hollywood.

SGT DUGGAN
The batteries are arcing!

He squeezes the trigger, but NOTHING HAPPENS. Duggan finds his Bradleys firing controls blinking, the interior lights fading, and panic rising.

SGT DUGGAN
Nothing, SHIT! Weapons systems are down, shit, shit, we're fucked.
(grabs the radio)
Red-1, this is 36, we're down with a gun stoppage! Our electronics are out!
(grabs the driver intercom)
Driver, back up! FULL REVERSE!

The driver puts the Bradley into REVERSE, starts backing up. when small arms fire DISABLES THE TRANSMISSION. The track STOPS DEAD. The driver frantically tries to get the Bradley moving!

ALPHA-DRIVER
(full blown panic)
They hit the trannie! She won't go! Transmission is out!

IRAQI SPIDERHOLE

An INFANTRYMAN pops up. He raises an RPG SHOULDER ROCKET, sights the Bradley, a dark silhouette atop a small ridge. He FIRES. The rocket trail sizzles toward it's target.

SGT DUGGAN

checks his scope for the bunker -- suddenly sees a ROCKET sizzling through the night. Straight at them! Duggan only has time to yell!

SGT DUGGAN
OPEN ALL HATCHES!

The hatches FLIP OPEN. The Sergeant's frantic attempt to depressurize the vehicle saves the crew's lives as the ROCKET IMPACTS, popping the turret--

--BLOWING DUGGAN UP OUT OF THE HATCH, throwing him over 30 feet. Duggan CRASHES HARD in the sand.

The driver scrambles OUT of his driver's hatch, tumbling INTO THE SAND, rolling to put out the FLAMES on his back.

BRADLEY (ALPHA-31)

Thru the sandstorm, 1LT MICHEAL VASSALOTTI, sees the hit! The gunner starts firing with his 25mm. The loader opens the hatch to reload the TOW launcher on the roof.

1LT VASSALOTTI
Thirty-six's hit! Duggan's hit!
Oh God, I think he's dead!

IRAQI BMP

sees the 25mm tracers, and turns on Vassalotti's BRADLEY. The BMP's deadly chain gun fire rips into--

BRADLEY (ALPHA-31)

sending sparks and shrapnel flying from the BULLET HITS, as the loader slams two fresh TOW missiles into the launcher. Slams the hatch shut.

ALPHA-31 LOADER
TOW up!

Vassalotti taps his gunner, who gets a *"System Ready"* on his panel. The gunner FIRES, the missile launching, now a golfball bouncing in his VIDEOSCREEN. He works the joystick, guiding the missile into the

IRAQI BMP

nipping the armored track's tail, BLOWING OFF the rear section.

BRADLEY (ALPHA-31)

Vassalotti watches the TOW impact from his hatch.

1LT KING
WE HIT THE SONOFABITCH!
Now medivac those wounded!

The driver brings his Bradley forward to evacuate.

The rear hatch opens, TROOPERS RUNNING INTO THE SANDSTORM to assist the wounded--

We hear a BLAST, then the WHISTLING of an approaching shell, as a TANK ROUND HITS the front slope beneath the turret. Inside, the blast triggers a SPRAY OF HALON, which IGNITES SEVERAL 25MM ROUNDS!

1LT Vassalotti is THROWN UP·OUT OF HIS HATCH! He lands draped across the machine gun barrel, blinded by the halon, unable to see!

The SURVIVING TROOPERS lie screaming in the raging sand!

The driver, wounded, steps on the Bradley accelerator, PULLING OUT!

1LT VASSALOTTI
(blinded, in agony)
Driver, stop! Stop! Stop for Christ's sake!

Blinded, near death, hanging on for dear life, Vassalotti clambers down the front of the careening Bradley to the driver's hatch.

1LT VASSALOTTI
DRIVER STOP! STOP this track!

The terrified driver finally obeys.

BRADLEY (ALPHA-22)

The gunner, SGT EDWIN KURTZ, is freaking--

SGT KURTZ
Jesus Christ! How do we fucking get out of this?

--when a TANK ROUND HITS, killing the gunner in a hyper-kinetic flash of death! Kurtz is already dead as his body LAUNCHES FIFTY FEET UP INTO THE AIR in flames!

CPT DAVIE'S BRADLEY

Davie cannot believe his eyes. Helpless to save his men, the young West Point Captain FIRES A BARRAGE OF SMOKE GRENADES, masking his Troop's withdrawal into a dirty BROWN CLOUD. The surviving Bradleys are retreating, evacuating dead and wounded, fighting for their lives.

CPT DAVIE
Battlestations, this is one, platoon REVERSE! FULL REVERSE! Everybody get back into that smoke!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. EAGLE TROOP - DAY

Eagle rumbles through the sandstorm. No contact yet.

Eagle Troop

M1 TANK (COUGAR-6)

The Squadron Commander keeps his tank well behind Eagle Troop. COL Dobbs is looking at his hand-held GPS as he radios Mad Max.

COL DOBBS
Eagle-6, Cougar-6, what is the fix on your tanks?

CPT LANCASTER ((RADIO)
Cougar-6, I know they're further forward than ordered, but I really think--

COL DOBBS
(cutting him off)
Give me the exact fix of your tanks!

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster knows he's busted.

CPT LANCASTER
Cougar-6, I'm, uh--
(checking)
at 665-025, over.

COL DOBBS (RADIO)
(screaming)
The limit of advance for tanks is the six five, Eagle-6. Just whom do I have to talk to in this unit to get my orders obeyed!

CPT LANCASTER
Uhh, roger, out.
(clicks off radio)
This is bullshit, not supporting the scouts with tanks! They can't go up against T-72's without support! They'll be sitting ducks.
(intercoms his driver)
Skog, you just stay on Red-1's ass.

SSG KOCH
But sir, the Colonel said--

LANCASTER
Just keep driving, Skog.

EAGLE'S BRADLEY SCOUTS

keep rolling into the BLINDING SANDSTORM, relying only on thermals for vision. Suddenly enemy MACHINE GUN FIRE opens up from a small

BUILDING COMPLEX

which was once an Iraqi oil worker facility. Green tracers streak across the sand at the advancing Scouts. Gun barrels protrude from the grey cinder block buildings. ENEMY VEHICLES are parked in the narrow streets.

BRADLEY (BLUE-1)

Tim Gauthier hears his Wingman SGT Harris's frantic call.

SGT HARRIS (RADIO)
Blue-1, this is Blue-3, I'm taking heavy machine gun fire.

1LT GAUTHIER
(glibly)
Well -- fucking kill 'em.

The gunner, Hovermale, shines a sick grin at Elric.

EXT. SANDSTORM

Visibility getting worse, Gauthier's Bradley suddenly appears in the sandstorm, pulling up beside Blue-3. Both pump 25mm chain gun HEIT (high explosive incendiary tracer) into the village. Each round explodes like a hand grenade.

1LT GAUTHIER (OS)
Black-1, this is Blue-1. We got contact to our four o'clock. Some kinda village.

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster flips the toggle increasing thermal magnification from 3x to 10x. Sights the village.

CPT LANCASTER
Battle stations! One round heat, village, direct front! Blue, mark the center with a TOW! Green, come up on my right. White come up on my left! Ready report!

BOTH BRADLEY

TOW missile launchers FLIP UP into their erect firing positions.

1LT GAUTHIER (OS)
Gunner missile building complex!

INT. BRADLEY (BLUE-1)

SGT Hovermale must wait five seconds for the missile "hammer" head to erect, plus another five for an electronic "systems check."

SGT HOVERMALE
C'mon, c'mon, c'mon -- guess you're gonna learn we're not the best guys to screw with.

CPT LANCASTER (RADIO)
Blue, fire TOW missile now!

TOW MISSILE

fires with a shower of sparks. The wire-guided ROCKET SOARS toward it's target at an extremely slow 100 meters per second.

1LT GAUTHIER (RADIO)
Roger, TOW on the way.

BOTH TANK PLATOONS

roll up into flanking positions on line with Mad Max.

1LT DESTEFANO (RADIO)
This is Green, ready.

1LT HAMILTON (RADIO)
This is White, ready.

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster watches from his open hatch.

CPT LANCASTER
FIRE!

NINE M1 TANKS

all FIRE SIMULTANEOUSLY -- nine 120mm heat rounds impact at once, an awesome display of sheer violence. They blow gaping holes in the buildings, blasting out entire walls, collapsing several roofs. Fireballs engulf the complex.

"MAD MAX"

Watching from the loader hatch, Taylor drops down to feed another round.

SPC TAYLOR
Yes! Whoa baby, didya see that?
It was better than sex!

Lancaster winks at his gunner.

CPT LANCASTER
If it takes a toothpick--

SGT KOCH
(grinning)
--use a baseball bat.

RED PLATOON BRADLEYS

continue FIRING TOW missiles and 25mm into the complex. We suddenly make out the Blue Cross of St. Andrew painted on MacBriar's M1 tank as

"SID VICIOUS"

approaches fast, inadvertently crossing into Red Platoon's line of fire!

BRADLEY (RED-4)

SGT Dolan is pumping 25mm into the complex. Thump, thump, thump -- when suddenly SSG Patterson yanks his gunner from the trigger.

SSG PATTERSON
Cease fire! It's the Major! Fuckin' Sid Vicious, nearly fratted his ass.

"SID VICIOUS" (COUGAR-3)

Gunfire rips over MacBriar's head, riding up in his hatch, blazing past. The Major drops down, realizing how close he came.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Jesus, Wade, you damn buffoon, I said to the fucking right of 'em!

"TACTICAL COMMAND" BRADLEY (BLACK-3)

Following faithfully behind is Willie Burn's Bradley, painted with the anarchy symbol. SSG Burns sticks his head out the hatch. He sees only Sid Vicious ahead of him. Realizes the Scouts are falling behind. He radios MacBriar.

SGT BURNS
Cougar-7, what's up? We're out ahead of the Scouts.

"SID VICIOUS"

MacBriar isn't interested in that building complex.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Keep moving, their main defense is still ahead of us.

SGT BURNS (RADIO)
Sir, but shouldn't we wait for the Scouts? That's why they call 'em Scouts.

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster surveys the building complex, satisfied it's been neutralized. Voices are buzzing on the radio nets. It's confusing, terribly difficult to figure out what is happening in the blindness of the raging shamal.

CPT LANCASTER
Cease fire, cease fire goddammit! All Eagle elements cease fire! Red-1 cease fire -- let's go! Keep moving!

"Mad Max" takes off for the 70 Easting. The two tank platoons follow Lancaster's M1 eastward through the Bradleys, presently arrayed to the front. Lancaster pulls ahead of MacBriar, back into lead position.

M1 TANK (COUGAR-6)

Colonel Dobbs is furiously looking at his GPS again.

COL DOBBS
Eagle-6, Cougar-6, the seventy is the limit of advance! Eagle-6, report!

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster is out front, LEADING THE TROOP eastward through the shamal. The Captain ignores Dobbs, as Taylor checks position on his GPS.

SPC TAYLOR
Sir, we're almost to the seventy one--

COL DOBBS (RADIO)
Eagle-6, this is Cougar-6, report your position. Eagle-6, report, damn you!

Lancaster delays his response. It's 16:18 hours as Mad Max CRESTS another, almost imperceptible rise. As it comes OVER THE TOP--

SSG KOCH
TANKS DIRECT FRONT!

EIGHT IRAQI T-72 TANKS

are dug into classic reverse-slope fighting positions. They are close. Large sand berms are pushed up in front of the tanks, all cleverly waiting on the back slope to surprise attackers coming over the rise.

But it is Eagle Troop who has surprised the Republican Guard -- having destroyed their Scouts earlier -- this ferocious sandstorm preventing the Iraqi's from having seen nor heard Eagle coming.

LANCASTER

is up in the hatch, full open, scanning them with his naked eye.

CPT LANCASTER
CONTACT! Five armored vehicles direct front! Three more off to the left!

SSG Koch hits the button on the laser range finder and the display under the gun sight shows 1420 meters.

CPT LANCASTER
Fire! Fire sabot, fire sabot!

With a HEIT round already loaded, Koch pulls the trigger, the breech recoils, and the first shot is off, firing over the right fender of the tank, which is still moving, the computer stabilization system keeping the main gun on target.

1ST T-72 TANK

Explodes into a colossal FIREBALL. The Iraqi Tank Commander is EJECTED up out of the turret hatch, his BODY ON FIRE, soaring like a comet.

LANCASTER

cringes at the gruesome fate of his enemy counterpart.

"MAD MAX"

swings it's guntube onto another tank. This one much closer, 450 meters, positioned forward of the others. The T-72 is already swinging around it's turret for a clean shot.

PFC TAYLOR

The spent metal cap ejects from the main gun. Taylor actuates the ammunition door. As it slides open, he grabs a SABOT round, and slams it into the breech--

PFC TAYLOR
Up!

Only three seconds have elapsed since the first tank kill. Koch lets the SABOT go -- a high velocity kinetic energy round with a tank defeating depleted uranium dart which travels at one mile per second.

SSG KOCH
On the way!

2ND T-72 TANK

turret SEPARATES FROM IT'S HULL in a hail of sparks. The hull bursts into flames as the penetrator dart ignites the fuel and ammunition compartments.

PFC HEDONSKOG

realizes they're in an enemy minefield.

PFC HEDONSKOG
Minefield!

He slows Mad Max down to 20 k.p.h, weaving between the mines, trying to keep the thick frontal armor facing the closest, more dangerous enemy tanks.

TWO T-72 TANKS

fire simultaneously. Both rounds MISS, falling short on either side of

"MAD MAX"

who is blasted with sand, reverberating from violent shock waves.

CPT LANCASTER
Christ! Tanks! Tanks direct front!
Green and White, you with me?

IRAQI T-72

The three man crew scrambles to get off another shot. The gunner, eyeballs on the target, estimates range and distance in the grid superimposed over the gunsight. Dials it into his Soviet fire control panel. But he has to wait.

IRAQI TC
Hurry, fire, FIRE!

We see the vulnerability of the Soviet AUTOLOADER, cramped tightly between the gunner and commander. Ten seconds is too damned long.

IRAQI GUNNER
Still reloading!

"MAD MAX"

Taylor only needs 3 seconds. He grabs another sabot off the ready-rack. Shoves it in the breech.

PFC TAYLOR
Up!

Koch lases the target. The M1 computerized fire control system even adjusts for "guntube droop" as it overheats from repeated firing. Koch squeezes the trigger.

SGT KOCH
On the way... TARGET!

3RD T-72

detonates into a FIREBALL!

SGT KOCH

is immediately scanning for another target.

SGT KOCH
Only get one shot in this league, pal.

GREEN & WHITE TANK PLATOONS

finally CREST THE RIDGE. It seems an eternity has passed. Now EIGHT M1 TANKS are now flanked in attack formation behind Mad Max.

M1 TANK (EAGLE/WHITE-1)

Mike Hamilton's gunner asks simply--

SGT MCFARLAND
There supposed to be units in front of us?

1LT HAMILTON
No -- why?

SGT MCFARLAND
Well, we've got tanks in front of us.

1LT HAMILTON
THEN SHOOT!

SGT MCFARLAND
Sir, that's not the procedure.

1LT HAMILTON
(screaming)
Then make up a new procedure!

THE BATTLE FRONT

Seems nobody wants to be the first to pull the trigger, but McFarland FIRES, and suddenly the dam is broken, ALL NINE M1 TANKS START FIRING, and The Battle of 73 Easting has begun.

More T-72 rounds fall short.

But Eagle Troop doesn't miss.

Within ten seconds, ALL EIGHT IRAQI TANKS ARE BURNING. It is a sensory Blitzkrieg. The near instantaneous transformation of this front line defensive position which is at one moment intact and in the next exploding, tank turrets separating from the hulls, shooting high into the air, and crashing upsidedown next to the burning tanks.

The problem is the mighty Tawakalna Division has hundreds of armored vehicles. Five times the strength. And now they know Eagle is here.

IRAQI COMMANDER'S BUNKER

The Commander has his binoculars out. He sees it, hears it happening. Godzilla is walking out of the desert. But this is impossible. The Iraqi Commander frantically reaches for the phone, calling to alert his people.

IRAQI COMMANDER
(Arabic w/ English subtitles)
ENEMY TO THE LEFT! Turn and engage, SHOOT, SHOOT, SHOOT!

IRAQI T-72 TANK

swivels it's guntube, FIRES! A tongue of flame spews out, as the tank round hits it's target--

M1 TANK (EAGLE/WHITE-1)

"Bullwinkle" Hamilton's M1 tank takes a glancing FRONTAL HIT -- her armor withstanding the impact -- all 65 tons slamming backward, her crew violently bounced inside the turret!

Hamilton's new dentures fly out of his mouth. The gunner, SGT McFarland, lies on the loader, elbow smashed, his head bleeding.

SGT MCFARLAND
WE'RE HIT!

Badly shaken, Hamilton mumbles without his false teeth.

1LT HAMILTON
We're okay, we're okay, Jesus Christ, my new dentures, they're firing at us--
(oddly amazed)
--those guys are really firing.

McFarland grabs the fallen dentures, picks himself off the floor.

SGT MCFARLAND
Blinding flash of the obvious, sir!

MORE IRAQI T-72S

counterattack through the burning smoke.

"SID VICIOUS"

MAJ MacBriar's tank is angling over toward the battle.

SGT ABACROMBIE
I see a tank!

MAJ MACBRIAR
Christ's sake, man, shoot it!

The breech recoils. All procedure is thrown to the wind.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Shoot again!

MacBriar is up in the hatch when an enormous BLAST throws the tank three feet in the air. A FIREBALL rolls up over the tank's front deck. The Major only has time to raise his arms, protecting his face, as the flames roll over him.

MAJ MACBRIAR
What the FUCK was THAT?

Sid Vicious has hit an ANTI-TANK MINE. The driver, Wade, has led them into a bed of Russian tilt-rods. But the blowing sands have leaned the mine sideways, turning the blast radius away from the tank's underbelly.

SGT ABACROMBIE
Wade -- Wade! I think Wade's dead!

DRIVER'S COMPARTMENT

Badly shaken, bleeding from his eyebrow, Wade pulls it together.

WADE
--I'm still here.

MAJ MACBRIAR (INTERCOM)
Christ, Wade, you damn buffoon,
drove us into a fucking minefield!

"TACTICAL COMMAND" BRADLEY (BLACK-3)

Willie Burns watches MacBriar's explosion.

SSG BURNS
MINEFIELD! Driver, stay in
MacBriar's tracks! Oh Lord, get me
outta this, I won't cuss, I won't
drink, I won't do nothin'!

Burns mumbles to his gunner, Holloway. Both are well aware this thin-skinned Bradley is not designed for engaging tanks.

SSG BURNS
Maybe we should just sit this one out.
I don't need to be slugging it out with
tanks. This is the big-boy's battle.

In back, Squadron XO John Hillen is surrounded by buzzing radios. He is stacking several FLACK JACKETS under his butt, protecting his family jewels.

1LT HILLEN
I don't have any kids.

THE REPUBLICAN GUARD

forces vastly outnumber Eagle Troop five-to-one. Iraqi T-72 TANKS are hidden in sand revettements everywhere.

EAGLE TROOP

is cutting a five kilometer swath of destruction through the enemy defense. Anti-personnel mines pop harmlessly beneath their tracks. Dense smoke from burning tanks creates a smoke screen beyond which nothing can be seen.

"MAD MAX"

passes close beside the first T-72 it killed. Lancaster, up in the turret, is scorched by the tremendous heat.

CPT LANCASTER
Assault, assault, assault! Stay on line, keep going! Let's do it cavalry!

A secondary EXPLOSION rips through the hull, sending a huge chunk of metal flying over Lancaster's head. He drops down into the turret.

M1 TANK (COUGAR-6)

The radio net has gone crazy with shouting voices. Dobbs realizes Eagle is in contact.

COL DOBBS
My God--
(a beat)
TURN RIGHT, driver! Swing us over to Eagle Troop's sector!

M1 TANK (WHITE-1)

Hamilton's gunner, SGT McFarland, sights ENEMY INFANTRY. He fires HEIT rounds. An Iraqi is hit -- VANISHING INTO GORE -- the sheer violence of it is shocking. We hear the 20-yr-old driver over the intercom.

SPC NEWTON (INTERCOM)
Like poppin' a zit. He was just gone!

The gunner locks up, freaked out, his hands whiteknuckled on the trigger grips.

SGT MCFARLAND
Oh God, I can't take this--

1LT HAMILTON
JUST MAINTAIN FIRE!

But the gunner is frozen. Hamilton grabs his gunner and SLAPS him hard.

1LT HAMILTON
Eddie, man, you wanna die? There's only one way outta this, keep firing, Eddie, it's the only way out! We ain't got any choices!

"MAD MAX"

penetrates the SMOKE SCREEN. Lancaster now sees that beyond the initial line of defense waits the main REPUBLICAN GUARD POSITIONS.

1LT GIFFORD (RADIO)
Eagle-6, this is Black-5, I know you don't want to hear this now, but remember the limit of advance is seven zero.

CPT LANCASTER
I can't stop. We're still in contact. I repeat, we cannot stop! Tell 'em I'm sorry...

"SID VICIOUS"

MacBriar and Abacrombie are up in their hatches. The Major is firing his captured Soviet 7.62 machine gun.

IRAQI INFANTRY

falling back to trenches are KNOCKED DOWN like bowling pins.

"SID VICIOUS"

Suddenly RETURN FIRE zips inches over their heads. Abacrombie DROPS into the turret. He peeks back out, as MacBriar keeps firing, undaunted.

SGT ABACROMBIE
They're shooting at us!

MAJ MACBRIAR
They're supposed to!

IRAQI T-72

tank hidden in a revettement, suddenly BUSTS THROUGH the sand berm, blazing forward, going for position on Eagle Troop.

BRADLEY (RED-4)

The thump-thump-thump of the 25mm shakes the Bradley as it fires. Ham Slices is terrified. SGT Dolan spots the advancing tank.

SGT DOLAN
Tank! It's turning on us!

SSG PATTERSON
Where is it!

SGT DOLAN
THE ONE I'M SHOOTING AT!

SSG PATTERSON
I need TOW up now! Let's go! What the fuck's wrong with you sandbaggin' dumbass motherfuckers!

Bertubin and Frazier desperately pound on the CARGO HATCH. But the LEVER IS STUCK. Without the hatch open, they can't load the missiles. Patterson is screaming, cursing, but it's no use.

SSG PATTERSON
Open it! We're sittin' ducks, open that goddamn hatch! Get it open!

Bertubin shoves Frazier backward.

PFC BERTUBIN
Out of my way!

The private KICKS THE LEVER with his boot. It BREAKS, snaps off. Frazier and Bertubin are stunned, sharing a fleeting "we're fucked" glance.

PFC BERTUBIN
SHIT! Busted it! The lever broke!

They try in vain to fix the lever.

SSG PATTERSON
We got fuckin' tanks slingin' 120's at us. Load those missiles fuckin' right now, goddammit!

It's the stuff that makes men heroes, that causes timid Charley Bertubin to rip off his CVC headset, AND OPEN THE RAMP DOOR.

PFC BERTUBIN
Get me two missiles!

PFC FRAZIER
(amazed)
What the hell're you thinkin'!

Bertubin bravely DISMOUNTS outside into the desert sand. He ignores the nightmarish panorama of violent death. With tracer fire whizzing over his head, the 19-year-old private climbs up on the Bradley's back deck.

Standing on top, Bertubin bravely goes to the turret, and TAPS PATTERSON ON THE SHOULDER. The Sergeant freezes. Bertubin taps him again as Patterson whips around, staring bug-eyed at the private.

PFC BERTUBIN
Get 'm to put it on TOW load!

Patterson CAN'T HEAR with winds, the explosions, and his CVC headset on.

PATTERSON
What the hell?

PFC BERTUBIN
(screaming)
PUT IT ON TOW LOAD!

The turret swings left, the launcher in position. Bertubin releases the locking lever, the empty missile casings dropping halfway out. He throws them into the sand. Scampers to the rear, where Frazier hands him a missile at a time from behind the track. Bertubin FINISHES LOADING. Jumps off the track.

PFC BERTUBIN
GET IN!

Both PFC's hurry inside the track. Bertubin grabs his CVC headset, as Frazier closes the ramp door.

PFC BERTUBIN
TOW up!

TOW MISSILE

fires from the launcher.

SGT DOLAN

guides the wire missile with his joystick.

SGT DOLAN
On the way!

The missile's tail jets glow brightly, bobbing up & down like a golfball in the sights. SGT Dolan controls the wire-guided rocket as if travels at an excruciatingly slow 100 meters per second.

IRAQI T-72

is destroyed!

BERTUBIN & FRAZIER

collapse in a heap. Frazier still can't believe Bert's heroism.

FRAZIER
(to Bertubin)
What the fuck got into you?

FIST-V (BLACK-1)

The light-skinned artillery vehicle is still up with the tanks. The driver, SPC Orth, abruptly SLOWS THE FIST-V, frozen by the surreal violent spectacle all around him. They fall behind the advancing tanks.

2LT DAVIS
Let's go, let's go! Move up and veer left, get us on the wing of the tank wedge!

INTERCUTTING

SPC ORTH
Sir -- we're not a tank!

2LT DAVIS
No falling back!

SPC ORTH
WE'RE NOT A TANK!

2LT DAVIS
I don't got time to explain it now, mister. Now MOVE!

The driver spits a wad of tobacco chew into his chili can. With great trepidation, he guns the hand throttle, lurching the artillery vehicle forward.

THE BATTLE FRONT

Mad Max leads Eagle charging at 30 mph, blasting through the enemy defense. Secondary EXPLOSIONS rock the ground, T-72s burning, INFANTRY running blindly for cover, vanishing into pink dust, as tracer rounds fire them up.

FIVE T-72 TANKS

wait dug in behind sandberms, traversing their guntubes on Eagle Troop.

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster scans up in the open hatch.

CPT LANCASTER
Scan left, left, quick!

SSG Koch spots them in his thermals. Soupy right-angles of white heat radiating from behind the sand berms.

SSG KOCH
Identify. Tanks, 10 o'clock!
T-72s at 1800 meters!

CPT LANCASTER
Gunner sabot tank! Send it right
through those sand berms.

Koch fires, the tank shuddering as the 120mm tank round fires, the metal cap of the tank round ejecting from the breach, clanking on the floor.

SGT KOCH
On the way! TARGET!

CPT LANCASTER
He can still shoot! Gunner sabot
tank! Hit it again! Fire!

Taylor hits the foot pedal, opening the ammunition blast door. He slams another blue SABOT round into the main gun in under three seconds.

SPC TAYLOR
Sabot up!

The tank shudders as the main gun fires.

SGT KOCH
On the way! Target!

Lancaster sees the kill through his thermals. But doesn't linger a second more, instantly scanning left--

THE BATTLE FRONT

looks like something out of *"War of the Worlds,"* the part where the martian fighting ships just advance, unstoppable, unworldly, just moving forward, spitting death everywhere they look. For the Tawakalna, it's like Sonny Corleone at the toll booth, it's just too damned late.

IRAQI INFANTRY

charge a Bradley in a suicidal wave, firing AK-47s like Rambo on drugs.

"TACTICAL COMMAND" BRADLEY (BLACK-3)

Willie Burns is up in the hatch, scanning for enemy. He spots the charging infantry, his voice matter-of-fact.

SSG BURNS
We got troops at 4 o'clock.

The 25mm chain gun chews them up, SGT Holloway announcing each kill--

SGT HOLLOWAY
Target -- target..., target.

Burns directs the fire. Bodies fly apart.

SSG BURNS
Slave left -- got some trying to take
an extra base, ooOOH, outta there!

M-1 TANK (COUGAR-6)

COL Dobbs races fullspeed through the sandstorm to catch up with Eagle.

SGT RUSSELL
(nervous)
Sir, we're gonna be right up
with 'em--

COL DOBBS
Driver, slow up--

Suddenly the Squadron Commander sees something, quickly slaves right, verifying with his thermals.

COL DOBBS
Tank! To our right, hard right!
Shoot 'it!

SGT RUSSELL
Still scanning -- shit!

COL DOBBS
Kill it!

SGT RUSSELL
On the way! Target!

The T-72 is hit direct front, turret popping off, riding a gusher flames, bouncing 50 feet away from the burning hull. Dobbs is amazed. The loader can't see.

PFC LUTHER
Whadaya see!

COL DOBBS
(in awe, deadpan)
Soviet tank with the easy-opening
pop-top lid.

BRADLEY (BLUE-1)

The scout vehicle comes around a corner of a BLOWN-OUT BUILDING. Tim Gauthier sticks his head up out of the hatch, eyes widening, seeing an

IRAQI T-72 TANK

guntube pointing at him only 800 meters away.

BRADLEY (EAGLE/BLUE-1)

Gauthier screams!

1LT GAUTHIER
CONTACT! Tank direct front!

SGT HOVERMALE
Driver stop!

1LT GAUTHIER
Erect the TOW hammer! Go, Go, GO!

IRAQI T-72

The Iraqi Sergeant screams at his gunner.

IRAQI SERGEANT
Fire!

The tank recoils from the blast.

BRADLEY (EAGLE/BLUE-1)

The T-72 tank round FALLS SHORT -- throwing earth up everywhere, blasting the Bradley's thin skinned bow. The SHOCK WAVE BOUNCES HER CREW HARD, the concussion knocking them silly.

SGT HOVERMALE
We're hit!

Fear and adrenaline winning over pain, 1LT Gauthier picks himself up.

1LT GAUTHIER
Shit, erect the TOW hammer, quick,
before he reloads!

It's a race to get off the next shot. Excruciating seconds tick away as the Bradley ERECTS THE TOW LAUNCHER up into firing position.

Hovermale valiantly suppresses the Iraqi tank with 25mm HEIT -- thump, thump, thump -- which peppers the tank's armor with staccato explosions, keeping the crew out of their hatches.

SGT HOVERMALE
Eat this, Od Nod! Eat it, EAT IT!

IRAQI T-72

The Iraqi Sergeant closes his turret hatch. The gunner must wait as the Soviet built AUTOLOADER takes 10 seconds to recycle another shell into

the main breech.

IRAQI SERGEANT
Faster, faster!

In his angst, the Sergeant drifts left, only a few inches, but enough for his SLEEVE TO CATCH IN THE AUTOLOADER MECHANISM which loads his arm into the main gun, severing it off at the elbow!

BRADLEY (EAGLE/BLUE-1)

The TOW launcher flips up, locking into firing position.

SGT. HOVERMALE
We're up!

1LT GAUTHIER
Then fucking kill it!

The TOW missile launches -- Hovermale guiding it home with his joystick.

SGT. HOVERMALE
On the way! Come to daddy, come to daddy!

IRAQI T-72

The Iraqi Sergeant bellows a crazed scream, blood spurting from his stump. Blue-1's TOW puts him out of his misery as it strikes, the turret ENGULFED IN FLAMES, melting into molten steel.

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster is still leading the charge. He comes upon a dozen ENEMY INFANTRY RAISING HANDS. Lancaster shows mercy, as his M1 rolls past.

CPT LANCASTER
Watch out, Black-3. Enemy troops are surrendering, I think they're surrendering--

Soon as the tank passes by, the Iraqi's PICK UP THEIR WEAPONS, and open fire at Lancaster in his open hatch. One enemy soldier RAISES AN RPG SHOULDER ROCKET the moment Lancaster's M1 passes. Aims for the vulnerable rear engine grill.

CPT LANCASTER
--Negative. They've got weapons! Engage the troops. Engage the troops! Fire up the troops!

BRADLEY (RED-4)

The 25mm chain gun suddenly QUITS on SGT Dolan.

SGT DOLAN
The batteries are arcing!

He squeezes the trigger, but NOTHING HAPPENS. Dolan finds his Bradley firing controls blinking, the interior lights fading, and panic rising.

SGT DOLAN
Nothing, FUCK ME! Weapons systems are down!

Patterson drops down to check, but it's hopeless. Scared to death, Frazier and Bertubin immediately man the portholes with their M-16s.

M-1 TANK (COUGAR-6)

The Squadron Commander is moving forward, approaching Eagle's scouts, positioned behind the tank wedge leading the assault. COL Dobbs, switching over to the Troop radio net, hears Patterson's panic!

SGT PATTERSON (RADIO)
Red-1, this is 4, we're down with a gun stoppage! Our electronics are out!

IRAQI SPIDERHOLE

An INFANTRYMAN pops up. Start firing on Patterson's Bradley.

M-1 TANK (COUGAR-6)

Dobbs sees the Iraqi infantry.

COL DOBBS
Troops at 9 o'clock firing up that downed Bradley!

Russell starts firing his coax, which suddenly JAMS!

SGT RUSSELL
Coax jam! SHIT!

IRAQI INFANTRY

keep firing. One picks up an RPG SHOULDER ROCKET. Raises it to his shoulder and sights Patterson's Bradley.

DOBBS

rises up in his hatch, torso fully exposed, and boldly engages the enemy with his M-62 MACHINE GUN. The Iraqi with the RPG ducks down.

COL DOBBS
Driver, run the bastards over!

The M-1 tank accelerates like a sports car, racing over the sand at 50 mph directly at the

IRAQI INFANTRY

who quickly toss away their weapons, trying to surrender, screaming, but it's already too late as the

M-1 TANK (COUGAR-6)

rolls right up to them -- VEERING at the last moment, sparing their lives. Dobbs aims his machine gun. The Iraqis immediately start chanting praise for the Americans.

IRAQI INFANTRY
(full blown panic)
George Bush is great, Bush is great man! Bush great man!

BRADLEY (RED-4)

Patterson cannot believe his eyes.

SSG PATTERSON
Damn if that ain't that the Colonel!

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster is still LEADING THE CHARGE. Eagle Troop is now in the middle of the Republican Guard's main assembly area. A coil of T-72s BURN before them, secondary explosions going off.

1LT GIFFORD (RADIO)
Six, this is five, uh, we need to watch going past the 73 because it's the fire support coordination line.

CPT LANCASTER
Tell 'em we're about 200 meters past the 73. We couldn't help it -- we were in contact.

LAUGHTER is heard over the net. Gifford pauses a short, thoughtful moment.

1LT GIFFORD
Roger.

FIST-V (BLACK-1)

Danny Davis is keeping pace with the big boys in his thin skinned artillery vehicle. He's up in the turret hatch using a hand-held BPS-5 night-sight. Suddenly sees something dead ahead--

IRAQI T-72 TANK

moving through the dunes.

DANNY DAVIS

Adrenaline surging, he snaps on com net.

2LT DAVIS
Tank, tank! White-1, Black-1, there's a tank right in front of you! See it?

M1 TANK (WHITE-1)

White Platoon Leader, "Bullwinkle" Hamilton, can't find it.

1LT HAMILTON
I don't got it. Where?

2LT DAVIS (RADIO)
Maybe 400 meters at 1 o'clock. Right there! Right in front of you!

The gunner, SGT McFarland, can't pick it up in his thermals.

SGT MCFARLAND
Still don't got it!

1LT HAMILTON
Where? WHERE! We can't pick it up!

2LT DAVIS (RADIO)
Follow my tracer!

FIST-V (BLACK-1)

Danny Davis gets on his pathetic M60 machine gun, and STARTS FIRING on the T-72. Bright orange tracers marking the bullseye -- to the horror of his crew.

SSG SHULTZ
What're you doin'? Now they can see us!

2LT DAVIS
Got 'm, Hamilton?

Danny Davis keeps firing, despite the fact his weapon is totally ineffective against the tank, whose GUNTUBE IS NOW SLAVING TOWARD THEM.

SSG SHULTZ
His guntube's coming around AT US!

M60 rounds sizzle through the sandstorm like ORANGE RIBBONS.

M1 TANK (WHITE-1)

In the THERMALS, the tracers become WHITE ARROWS marking the target. Hamilton pulls away from the scope.

1LT HAMILTON
I got it! Scan left, left -- hurry!
Fire sabot tank!

SGT MCFARLAND
Still can't see it!

1LT HAMILTON
THERE! Hell, I'm takin' her--

Hamilton overrides his gunner's controls, lases the target, and FIRES the main gun. The T-72 BLOWS SKYHIGH in a brilliant plume of fire, punctuated by secondary explosions, fuel and ammo reserves going one after the other.

2LT DAVIS (RADIO)
Nice goin', Hamilton, that was
spectacular!

1LT HAMILTON
Roger, Black-1, that's what we call
the Hammy-Slammy.

IRAQI INFANTRY

keep rushing the tanks, they keep coming and coming.

THERMAL GUNSIGHTS

displays an IRAQ INFANTRYMAN. The white glowing enemy soldier is firing his AK-47.

BRADLEY (BLUE-1)

His AK-47 does nothing more than scratch the paint. SGT Hovermale pulls from the sights, taps 1LT Gauthier on the shoulder, as if offering up desert.

SGT HOVERMALE
Hey sir, there's a guy up there,
you wanna take him?

1LT GAUTHIER
No, man, if you've got contact,
take him.

SGT HOVERMALE
Aw, c'mon, sir. You deserve one.

1LT GAUTHIER
No thanks.

SGT HOVERMALE
Aw, c'mon, you've been a good Lieutenant. Haven't punched the override once the whole battle. You deserve it, sir.

1LT GAUTHIER
No thanks, Hovermale.

SGT HOVERMALE
But 'Elric' wants you to.

1LT GAUTHIER
Stop screwing around and wax the motherfucker!

THERMAL SIGHTS

We hear poom, poom, poom -- and the thermal image pops, DISAPPEARING into a WARM GLOW upon the desert sand.

"MAD MAX"

Lancaster DRIVES OVER THE WET SPOT and keeps going.

CPT LANCASTER
Slow it up, Skog. Bring us to a halt.

The Eagle Troop Leader brings his track to a FULL STOP.

"SID VICIOUS"

SGT Abacrombie fidgets in his seat.

SGT ABACROMBIE
Gotta take a leak bad, sir.

MAJ MACBRIAR
The head's outside, Sergeant.

Nervous as hell, Abacrombie cautiously CLIMBS OUT of the hatch.

The night is a surreal panorama of burning death. Abacrombie scampers rearward, tracer fire zipping over his head. He JUMPS DOWN, taking cover behind the tank. He crouches down, way down, camera tightening upon his face, as he urinates. Suddenly his eyes fill with amazement as he sees

MACBRIAR

standing behind the tank, rummaging through a rutsack tied in back, fixing a peanut butter & jelly SANDWICH. The Major speaks with his mouth full.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Fighting always makes me hungry.

THE AMMO TRUCK

pulls up beside "Mad Max" in the middle of this hairball. The driver, Private "Battle" must be braver than hell, or too stupid to know better. He hops out of his thin skinned HEMTT truck, and starts offloading 65lb tank rounds.

PFC TAYLOR

is none too happy having to dismount from his turret to help.

PFC BATTLE
Keep it up, keep it up, you guys are doin' great!

SPC TAYLOR
You're nuts gettin' up here, man. One piece of hot shrapnel cancel's your ticket!

Nervous energy keeps Battle talking as he slings out the ammo.

PFC BATTLE
Hey, man, bottom line is that if they get through you, what've I got to stop them?

H.R. LANCASTER

grimly surveys the devastation.

CPT LANCASTER
We lose anybody?

SGT KOCH
(amazed, thankful)
Not one man, sir.

Lancaster takes a deep, thankful breath.

SGT KOCH
If you'd listened to orders, sir, stopped the assault, the enemy would've regrouped, and God knows how many we would've lost then.

PFC TAYLOR
Way to go, sir!

Lancaster deeply appreciates his men's words.

PFC HEDONSKOG
Can I have a heart attack now?

"SID VICIOUS"

MacBriar radios XO John Hillen in the Command Post Bradley.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Black-3, call Regiment, tell Dragoon-6 where we are, tell him we are still at 100% percent combat power. Tell him that we are in a strong position and I see no requirement to fall back!

MORTAR ROUNDS

start DROPPING on the trenchline forward of Eagle Troop. The area is washed with traversing fire.

FIST-V

The artillery vehicle unleashes it's might. The night fills with thunder of booming guns. Danny Davis watches through BINOCULARS with a smile.

1LT HAMILTON (RADIO)
Black-1, this is White-1, I see several Iraqi's running around now. It looks like they're trying to get to the.... Oops. Never mind. I just saw two VT flashes over their heads, and now no one's moving. End of mission.

COMMAND TRACK BRADLEY

Lancaster & MacBriar are standing around, waiting for Regiment's order to continue on. John Hillen turns with bad news.

1LT HILLEN
Sir, I'm afraid Regiment wants us to fall back to the seven zero.

MAJ MACBRIAR
(outraged)
I am NOT falling back! No one with my name has ever fallen back! Not at Waterloo, the Somme, or anywhere else! I'll be damned if I will now!

1LT HILLEN
But sir, they gave an order.

MAJ MACBRIAR
YOU CALL THEM AGAIN and you tell Dragoon 6 that Cougar 3 says we are in a strong position and that it would be a MISTAKE to fall back!

IRAQI SOLDIERS

still charge on foot, blazing away with the AKs.

BRADLEY (RED-1)

Patterson fixes them in his thermals. He answers with 25mm

Patterson fixes ther

SSG PATTERSON
You dumb fucks.

IRAQI COMMANDER

watches from his bunker as his TROOPERS ARE ERASED by chain gun fire. His face tightens with the sheer futility of it.

He turns back into his bunker. This is professional oblivion. His men, his equipment, the training, all worthless. He PICKS UP HIS RIFLE, considers dying gloriously. Turns for the door. But stops. What would it be for what? He DROPS THE RIFLE, RAISES HIS HANDS and WALKS OUT, his face showing awe and fear, sorrow and relief. It's over.

"COMMAND TRACK" BRADLEY

Frustrated, depressed, MacBriar stares at the PHOTO OF ROMMEL inside the track. Lancaster knows what the Major is thinking.

CPT LANCASTER
What do you think would've happened if Rommel was in charge?

MAJ MACBRIAR
We'd be in Baghdad.

THE "PSY-OPS" TEAM

The glow of burning vehicles gives the night an eerie aura. The two-man team drives through the battlefield, BROADCASTING a surrender appeal over the huge stereo speakers rigged to roof of their HUMMVW.

PSY-OPS TEAM
(broadcasting in Arabic)
You have thirty seconds to surrender or you will be destroyed in a firestorm of steel. This is your only chance to live. If you surrender now, you will be treated honorably.

He repeats the offer several times--

IRAQI COMMANDER

emerges slowly, hands on his head, slowly leading about THREE DOZEN surrendering Iraqis. The Psy Ops interpreter broadcasts instructions, which the prisoners quickly obey.

PSY OPS TEAM
(broadcasting in Arabic)
Get in single file, put your hands clasped behind your head--

BRADLEY (RED-4)

rolls up to intercept the procession. The rear doors open, a scout section including Bertubin & Frazier dismount to process the prisoners. They are lined up in rows, searched, segregated, and lined up in rows sitting upon the ground.

SSG PATTERSON

sees the Commander. He smiles an Alabama grin, climbs out of his turret, drops into the sand with his M16, and approaches the Iraqi Major, who surveys the filthy Sergeant with a melancholy look.

IRAQI COMMANDER
(perfect English)
These 41 are all that are left.

Patterson is surprised by the Iraqi's British accent. The Major turns back to the battlefield.

IRAQI COMMANDER
(sadly)
We were once a powerful Army.

Patterson drags the Iraqi officer by the ear.

SSG PATTERSON
C'mere dick.

Pulls him to a blast hole in a BURNING WRECKAGE, made by the main gun of an M1 Abrams.

SSG PATTERSON
This is power, dick. Right here.
And that's what did it.

Patterson points to an M1 ABRAMS stopped not far away. When the Commander sees the tank, deadly and beautiful, he starts to lose it.

IRAQI COMMANDER
My God--

SSG PATTERSON
That's what tore your ass off.

IRAQI COMMANDER
(sincerely)
The U.S. Army rules the heavens
and rules the Earth.

The Iraqi Commander looks back at all his dead scattered everywhere.

IRAQI COMMANDER
May we bury them?

SSG PATTERSON
No, we ain't got time for that,
say a prayer over them.

The Iraqi Commander calls out to his men in Arabic. Some POWs kneel beside the dead, offering a brief prayer. A few write messages on SCRAPS OF PAPER, leaving them atop their fallen comrades.

COMMAND TRACK BRADLEY

Willie Burns rips off the Iraqi Major's SHOULDER BOARD. Smiles.

SSG BURNS
Souvenir.

Captain Lancaster salutes the Iraqi Commander. He salutes back, as Burns leads the prisoner into the back of the Command Track Bradley. The Iraqi Commander stares at the PHOTO OF ROMMEL.

IRAQI COMMANDER
Why do you have Rommel's picture
there when he was an adversary of
yours in World War Two?

SSG BURNS
If you'd read a little bit more about
Rommel, you wouldn't be in the back
of this vehicle, so shut-the-fuck-up.

IRAQI COMMANDER
I trained at your Fort Benning.

Both Burns & Lancaster are shocked.

IRAQI COMMANDER
I lived on Patton Avenue.

SSG BURNS
I LIVED on Patton Avenue! Christ, what're we thinkin' trainin' these dicks.

THE IRAQI POWS

find the MREs confusing. Some eat the KOOL-AID without water, purple beverage powder all over their lips. An Iraqi POW kneels down, in the traditional modest pose, to relieve his bladder. Koch & Taylor watch.

PFC TAYLOR
What's he doin', sir, praying again?

SGT KOCH
Kinda late for prayer, no, shit, he's whizzin', damn that's weird.

PFC TAYLOR
Stand up, bitch.

SGT PATTERSON

is WHISTLING a tune as he renders first aid to a WOUNDED Iraqi POW. His leg is shot up pretty bad. As the Sergeant turns to grab another bandage, the POW reaches into the MEDICAL KIT, and STEALS SOME IV NEEDLES.

As Patterson concentrates on the bleeding leg, the POW strikes, trying to stab the needles into the veteran Sergeant -- who grabs his arm in mid-air. Patterson slams the POW in the head with his M-16. The Iraqi slumps unconscious. Unfazed, Patterson keeps whistling, continues treating his leg.

AN IRAQI CORPORAL

holds a SAMSONITE suitcase to his chest. The Americans processing him see it, immediately make him throw it down.

PFC BERTUBIN
Booby-trapped?

PFC FRAZIER
Let him open it -- open it!

The American's gestures are clear. The Iraqi Corporal timidly obeys. He dials in his combo, opens up, revealing a suitcase full of cash -- Kuwaiti Dinars.

PFC BERTUBIN
Holy shit, this fuckin' guy has got a King's Ransom--

PFC FRAZIER
Looks like Kuwaiti money.

He CLOSES the suitcase, HANDS IT BACK. The Corporal is flabbergasted as the Americans move on to the next prisoner and let him keep it.

COMMAND TRACK BRADLEY

The Iraqi Major looks up at Captain Lancaster.

IRAQI COMMANDER
Can you send your soldiers to help my wounded men one kilometer to the east?

CPT LANCASTER
I'm sorry, they're calling in artillery. Why didn't your men carry them out?

The Iraqi Commander has no answer.

AN IRAQI POW

suddenly starts SCREAMING, talking in Arabic like this is jihad, getting the other POWs revved up outside the Command Track.

WILLIE BURNS

shakes his head at this annoyance.

SSG BURNS
Aw shit, they're gonna do something stupid.

The black sergeant checks the load on his M16, hands it to Lancaster.

SSG BURNS
If something happens, just start shooting, sir, because I KNOW I'm gettin' Medivac'd first.

With a don't-fuck-with-me hitch in his step, Burns walks out amongst the POWs, straight up to the screaming Iraqi, and slams a boot into his chest. Burns grabs him by the hair, dragging him out in front of everybody.

SSG BURNS
SIT DOWN and shut-the-FUCK-up!

Burns turns and walks right back to the Bradley. Grabs his M16 from Lancaster.

SSG BURNS
Thanks, sir.

FIST-V ARTILLERY VEHICLE

2LT Danny Davis checks his watch. 2240 Hours. Suddenly both the Howitzer Battery and the MLRS (multiple launch rocket system) START FIRING east, on a grid more than three kilometers wide and one kilometer deep.

Davis smiles at the spectacular sight -- the BOOMS & FLASHES of the guns, the RUSHES & STREAKS of light from the rockets, and the peppering impact of the ICM bomblets finding their marks -- 4th of July was never like this.

Hotter than hell. The hatches are shut because of light discipline, everybody stripped down to their underwear and boots, drenched with sweat.

The Howitzers have been firing so long, that carbon is building up, sending twenty foot flames shooting out of the guns. The nearly nonstop thunder is felt as clearly as it is heard. We hear the

TROOPERS

"ooohs and ahhhs" followed by roaring APPLAUSE. Davis grins like a kid.

2LT DAVIS
The Armageddon Strike, man.

COMMAND TRACK BRADLEY

The Iraqi Commander watches the fireworks display, the ground shaking under his feet. He sadly turns to Lancaster, his voice grave.

IRAQI COMMANDER
Now they are all dead....

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. EAGLE TROOP - DAWN

The Iraqi sky lightens to a hazy purple as the dawn arrives. Dead vehicles are still burn throughout the battlefield. Eagle Troopers are still busy processing more surrendering prisoners.

2/27/91 -- The Day After

The Troop meanders through the Iraqi wreckage. Dobbs & MacBriar walk with Lancaster, drinking coffee. The Colonel suddenly yanks his Captain backward.

COL DOBBS
WATCH IT!

An unexploded munitions lies in the sand -- right where he was going to step.

CPT LANCASTER
Fuckin' bomblets, must be tons of unexploded munitions laying all around.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Archeology 300 years from now is certainly going to be exciting.

They continue walking up a slight hill. Lancaster looks over at his Squadron Commander with a new found admiration.

CPT LANCASTER
According to Sergeant Patterson, I'm not the only ass you saved, sir.

COL DOBBS
Only did it because I had to.

CPT LANCASTER
Heard it wasn't exactly proper military tactics you used.

COL DOBBS
Don't get any fucking ideas, Captain.

Lancaster grins at MacBriar as they reach the top. Young private JASON KICK sits, somberly watching the OIL FIRES burn in the distance. The thick black smoke makes the mid-day sun look more like the moon.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Christ, look at em' all.

PFC KICK
I count 57 oil fires, sir.

Kick's hand trembles as he lights another cigarette. He stares at the 14 caret gold LIGHTER he's cherished all these months.

PFC KICK
Won this last when our Bradley shot 1000 at Grafenwhor last year. I couldn't wait to see combat...

The humble tone of his voice tells us what a fool he was.

COL DOBBS
We saw the elephant, son. She's one ugly bitch, isn't she?

"MAD MAX" - LATER

Lancaster peels off his MOPP suit. Get completely naked. The man hasn't showered in nearly a week, the residue from the charcoal liner blackening

his skin. He decides to take a shower on the back deck of Mad Max -- much to the horror of the physically modest

IRAQI POWS

who watch appalled as H.R. wipes himself down with Handiwipe towelettes.

TIM GAUTHIER

walks by, cracking up at the POWs reaction.

1LT GAUTHIER
Look at this, not exactly body by Charles Atlas, the pig infidel who destroyed their civilization.

THE POW'S

are doing "THE WAVE" to passing cavalrymen.

A POW tries to make sense of the MRE he's been given. Holds the tiny bottle of TABASCO SAUCE included. Opens it. DRINKS IT. Starts screaming!

BEGIN MONTAGE:

CNN footage of Coalition Forces entering Kuwait City. Apache helicopter gunships overhead. Kuwaiti flags, U.S. flags, very emotional. Thousands of Kuwaitis cheering, chanting *"Bush! Bush!" "God Bless America!"*

A truimphant PRESIDENT BUSH from the White House.

PRESIDENT BUSH
Kuwait is liberated. Iraq's army is defeated. Our military objectives are met...

CNN footage of the infamous "Highway of Death," the traffic jam of charred Iraqi vehicles trying to escape Kuwait City, destroyed by Coalition Forces. Ghastly image of the charred body of an Iraqi soldier in the front seat of a burned out truck. Teeth gritted in final agony, his face burned away. Among the wreckage looted TV's, perfume bottles, children's toys.

SCHWARZKOPF on CNN answers questions in a bravuro performance to the world TV audience in what was dubbed the 'Mother of All Briefings.' He points to a BRITISH JOURNALIST inside the huge tent.

BRIT JOURNALIST
You said the gates were closed. Do you have ground forces blocking the way to Basra?

GEN SCHWARZKOPF
No.

BRIT JOURNALIST
Is there any way they can get out that way?

GEN SCHWARZKOPF
(very cavalier)
No.
(pauses for laughter)
And that's why the gate's closed.

He jumps to another journalist's question...

END MONTAGE:

EXT. IRAQI DESERT - EAGLE TROOP - DAY

Eagle is still stopped in the battlefield, destroyed enemy tanks still smoldering, helicopters circling around, black oil fires in the distance. So surreal, you almost have to pinch yourself. Filthy, exhausted TROOPERS listen to the President over a TRANSISTOR RADIO. The towering black oil fires burn in the near distance.

PRESIDENT BUSH (RADIO)
...I am pleased to announce that at midnight tonight, Eastern Standard Time, exactly 100 hours since ground operations commenced, and six weeks since the start of Operation Desert Storm, all U.S. and Coalition Forces will suspend offensive combat operations.

While most of the Troopers whoop it up, slapping high fives, thanking sweet God -- the news is not met with pleasure by H.R. Lancaster.

CPT LANCASTER
(disillusioned)
Meanwhile four Divisions of Republican Guard are getting away across the Euphrates. We're leaving two thirds of their elite force intact.

Dobbs gestures to this surrealistic hellhole they are standing amidst.

COL DOBBS
And you would have us risk more American lives for *this*?

PSY OPS SPEAKERS

broadcast that ultimate James Brown tune *"I Feel Good!"* to the Troop. Troopers are dancing with each other. Willie Burns shows Wade some

black dance moves. Chris Hedonskog is leading the POWs singing, acting like he's holding a microphone. The prisoners sing harmony.

JAMES BROWN
(singing)
Good..., So good..., I got you!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. 73 EASTING BATTLEFIELD - LATER

GEN FRED FRANKS limps on his artificial leg through the battlefield with a gaggle of AIDES & STAFF OFFICERS. They are taking photographs, measuring holes in destroyed vehicles, calculating ranges to enemy positions. Leading them are COL DOBBS, MAJ MacBriar and CPT LANCASTER.

GEN FRANKS
At what range did you engage this tank, Col Dobbs?

MacBriar answers for Dobbs, attempting to protect Lancaster.

MAJ MACBRIAR
We were moving at this point. I estimate--
(he pauses, lies)
1500 meters, sir.

CPT Lancaster is surprised MacBriar is covering for him. But a staff officer, measuring the blast hole in the T-72's front slope, expresses doubt.

STAFF OFFICER
I don't know, sir. One of our 120mm SABOT rounds went through the front slope here, and came out through the engine compartment.

The General grasps what is going on. He turns to Lancaster.

GEN FRANKS
So, Captain, more like 800 meters?

CPT LANCASTER
Yes, sir. Most of the killing was at close range.

GEN FRANKS
(terse)
Because you had exceeded the limit of advance, isn't that right?
(then to Dobbs)
Isn't that right, Colonel Dobbs?

COL DOBBS
The Captain was ordered no further than the seventy.

GEN FRANKS
The attacking force should outnumber the defender three to one. That's what you were taught the 'Point You were outnumbered, Captain, according to my staff's calculations, by five to one.

LANCASTER
(revved up to explain)
Yes, sir, but I saw an opportun--

GEN FRANKS
(cutting him off)
What in God's name made you think you could pull this off, Captain?

Lancaster glances at Dobbs, who clearly anticipates this arrogant rubgy player from West Point hanging himself with his loose mouth.

CPT LANCASTER
(deep conviction)
Had to go with my gut, sir. I don't know any other way. We all believed in one another and ourselves as a unit. Every soldier acted aggressively and without hesitation. The Iraqi's, no matter how many tanks they had, never had a chance.

General Franks listens -- then smiles, obviously moved.

GEN FRANKS
Stonewall Jackson said, 'In war there is a power more potent than mere numbers.'

The silver haired General nods, wrapping an arm around Lancaster.

GEN FRANKS
Come along, H.R., show me the rest.

Franks leads Lancaster on. Dobbs glares, shocked at the General. MacBriar leans confidentally into the Squadron Commander's ear.

MAJ MACBRIAR
I bet Franks give him a damn medal. I know how proud you must be, sir.

MacBriar grins mischieviously and walks on.

A CNN CREW

drives up in a HUMMVW. It shoots footage, idles up beside Bob Patterson esitting on his Bradley, digging into an MRE.

CNN REPORTER
Hey, Sarge. Whadaya think of the war?

SSG PATTERSON
Hell, we train harder than this.

CUT TO:

EXT. TALJLL AIR BASE - DAY

A 25-foot-tall SADDAM HUSSEIN likeness is bolted high above an ornate archway at the entrance of Taljll Air Base. He stands smiling, in uniform, hands behind his back, sidearm at his hip. We pull back to find

COL DOBBS

standing below the Iraqi leader. He turns to H.R. LANCASTER. But Dobbs's tight expression eases into a smile. He acknowledges his young Eagle Commander with a salute. Surprised, deeply touched, Lancaster salutes back. COL Dobbs's eyes show he has learned something from this young warrior. The Squadron Commander lowers his salute -- gives Lancaster a CHAIN SAW.

COL DOBBS
(respectfully)
Bring me the head of that sonofabitch, Captain.

CPT LANCASTER
With pleasure, sir.

Lancaster begins climbing up the statue's scaffolding, carrying the chainsaw. He climbs up Saddam's back. Reaching the dictators smiling face, Lancaster stops, mugging for snapshots, waving down to his buddies below.

Lancaster cranks the chainsaw to life and CUTS OFF SADDAM'S HEAD. The decapitated wooden likeness FALLS to the dirt below.

The Troopers cheer wildly. "Ham Slices" barks at it. Willie Burns and Bob Patterson whoop it up, start waltzing on top of the Saddam's head.

DOUG MACBRIAR

climbs up the scaffolding, joining his young Captain high upon the archway, looking down at their Troopers celebrating, howling below.

CPT LANCASTER
Where I come from, sir, to kill a snake, you gotta cut the head off.

MacBriar blows out a breath. This Scotsman could not agree more.

MAJ MACBRIAR
You fought like a goddamn caveman.

CPT LANCASTER
Thanks, sir.

MAJ MACBRIAR
Thank you, Commander.

MacBriar offers a home-baked CHOCALATE CHIP COOKIE from a baggie.

MAJ MACBRIAR
William's mom sent 'em. Slightly stale, but war is hell.

H.R. grins at MacBriar. Bites into the cookie. MacBriar pats him on the back, as we begin pulling away over the endless desert--

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OIL FIRES - DAY

We fly over the OIL FIRES, through the greasy black smoke belching upward 24 hours-a-day, choking this desert world. We see caravans of REFUGEES walking along a desert road, carrying everything they own.

LANCASTER

looks out the window of his L-1011 TRANS AMERICA flight home. We see relief, yet frustration in his eyes. This warrior has to turn his head away.

FADE TO BLACK